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STUDENTS ABROAD
Aspects of exchange students' language

Volume XIII 1994

Edited by Anna Mauranen
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CONTENTS

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ASPECTS OF EXCHANGE STUDENTS' LANGUAGE

INTRODUCTION

Recent trends towards internationalization have resulted in a notable expansion of student exchange programmes in Finland in the last few years, and this in turn has meant new challenges to language teaching. Most universities which send students abroad use language tests as part of their selection procedures, and some universities have begun to develop special language courses for those who participate in the programmes. However, what the tests and the courses should consist in is not very clear yet, since the exchange programmes are fairly new. Not much is known about the specific demands on students' language skills that a year abroad makes, or about the adequacy of Finnish students' foreign language skills in this situation. Do we need to test students' language proficiency? If so, what should we look for, what level to aim at, and above all, what status should the results of a language test have, if any, in selecting students for the programmes? Should we offer preparatory language courses for those who are on the programmes, or those who wish to apply, or perhaps include relevant elements in all foreign language courses? Do the students themselves and the receiving universities feel that Finnish students need better language skills?

All of these questions need to be investigated before we can make informed decisions. The current issue of Finlance is dedicated to the preliminary research that has been carried out in Finland on exchange students' language use. Most of the papers are reports from the research project "Communication in International Student Exchange", started in 1992 at the Language Centre for Finnish Universities, University of Jyväskylä, which is concerned with student discourse in a context of cultural contrast. This project is introduced more fully below. Two papers have been included on work which is outside this project but on closely related topics. Both of these are based on interviews and questionnaires and are concerned with exchange students' experiences and difficulties with language in British universities. One of the papers has been written by two MA students at the department of English, University of Jyväskylä, and is based on their MA thesis. Heli Harjula and Sari Manninen report on the results of a survey they carried out among the Jyväskylä University students who had spent a study year at the University of Kent during the academic years 1989-90, 1990-91, and 1991-92. In their survey Harjula and Manninen used both questionnaires and

interviews, in which the students were asked to assess the sufficiency of their language skills in various academic situations. Thus the study gives first-hand information of the students' own feelings about their linguistic problems and the development of their language skills during the year abroad.

The other paper outside the main project is written by a team of lecturers at Helsinki University Language Centre: Joan Nordlund, Nanette Lindeberg and Pearl Lönnfors. This article is more directly oriented towards language teaching than the others, and combines a needs analysis approach with course planning which utilizes the analysis, and also includes a description of the course itself. Furthermore, the course was actually implemented, and participants spent a year as exchange students at Edinburgh, which enabled them to give authentic feedback on the course. The needs analysis among both Edinburgh staff and the students identified two major language problem areas, which were essentially the same as those in the other studies: speaking in seminars and writing essays. These areas were incorprated in the preparatory course with apparent success. The course also included a considerable amount of cultural material, which was generally found useful.

The project at LCFU: Communication in International Student Exchange

The project Communication in International Student Exchange explores the problem area from various angles. The central methods in this study have been interviews, as in the other studies, but in addition to that, observations in seminar situations and linguistic analysis of student output have been used, as well as students' self-assessment of their proficiency. The main focus in the project has been on a group of seven students from the University of Jyväskylä who spent the academic year 1992-93 abroad, studying at the University of Kent (6 students) and at the University of Bonn (1 student). Two field trips were made by the members of the project, both sponsored by the Finnish Ministry of Education. Anna Mauranen, Minna-Riitta Luukka and Raija Markkanen spent two weeks at the University of Kent, Canterbury, in February 1993 collecting material for the project. Sabine Ylönen spent a week at the University of Bonn in April 1993 also collecting data.

The research questions that were set for the project were concerned with the demands that communicative situations made on exchange students' language, and the students' responses to these, together with the students' and their teachers' assessment of how adequately the demands were met. More specifically, the first question was how the genres and the discourse demands on students differ in the

home and host universities, and how these requirements are described by different parties, that is, students and teachers. The second question was how students cope with the demands in the foreign situation. That is, what do they find difficult, and do their teachers see the difficulties in the same way? Thirdly, the question arose how cultural differences would be reflected in students' written output and seminar behaviour, if indeed at all. And finally, it was necessary to ask how far participants were aware of the cultural differences that were underlying the communication situations where exchange students participated.

Approach and Methods

To answer these questions, then, we set out to describe the typical study genres, that is, established discourse types, that students encounter in a foreign university during an exchange year, and as a basis for comparison, the study discourses in their home university. In addition, we intended to analyse samples of written study genres, primarily essays, produced by the students during the exchange year and in their home university, and compare these to native speaker students of the host country. And finally, the students' evaluation of their language skills both in advance of the foreign experience and during the year were to be elicited.

Since the study was at this stage necessarily exploratory, it seemed the best policy to proceed by selecting a small sample of students, and to approach them as case studies, that is, to cover as many aspects of their experience as possible. Thus we selected seven students from the name list of those accepted for the programme, trying to cover both sexes and different subjects of study.

One of the main methods was interview. The research questions made it necessary to conduct altogether five types of interview, where the exchange students were interviewed twice.

1. Interviews with exchange students. After the students had been selected for the exchange programme, a few months before they were due to leave, they were interviewed at their home university. The interview was structured, partly based on a forced-choice questionnaire, and carried out by five different research assistants. The questions concerned the major communicative situations and discourse types (e.g. lectures, examinations, consultations with teachers...) that the students participate in during their ordinary studies at their own university: how frequent they are and what these discourses require. Some of the questions were evaluative, asking the students to assess the common discourse types in terms of how motivating, difficult, anxiety-arousing etc. they were. The highly structured format of the interview turned out to be rather

restricitive, although it was useful in view of the number of interviewers. It was therefore replaced later with a more open format, and the work was divided between three researchers only.

2. A similar interview was conducted in the middle of the students' exchange year in England and Germany, but with open-ended questions and without the previous emphasis on evaluation. The students were asked to list the major communicative situations that they participate in, and to describe the communicative requirements that these situations make on them. At this stage, the students were also asked to comment on the possible language or communicative difficulties they had encountered, as well as on any differences they had observed between study discourses in Britain/Germany and Finland.

3. A similar interview on communicative situations and their communicative requirements was conducted with British and German students who participated in the same seminars as the exchange students.

4. Teacher interview in Finland. Teaching staff were interviewed from the departments where the exchange students were doing their major subject. The interview was again semi-structured, with open questions. The questions concerned the major discourse types that students participate in during their ordinary studies at their own university, and what the teachers require from students.

5. A similar interview with English and German lecturers and tutors during the exchange year in England and Germany. The staff interviewed in Britain and Germany were also asked questions about the possible difficulties with language that they felt the students might be having.

In addition to the interviews, seminar sessions were observed in Finland, England and Germany. The seminars observed in Finland were not recorded on tape. In England several seminars were recorded by the research team, at least one session with each of the students. The observations focused on the student's contribution to the discourse and his or her means of participation. In practice this did not produce much material at Kent, since the students were very quiet. In Germany, two sessions from an intensive course were videotaped.

After the observed seminar sessions, both the student involved and the seminar leader were briefly interviewed on their impressions of the situation, and on whether the session and their own contributions had been typical.

The written material to be analysed linguistically was collected mainly through the students, who were asked to submit essays and other written assignments that they had produced in their own university and in the foreign university. The British student essays were obtained with the help of lecturers, who were able to suggest suitable specimens. In Germany, virtually no written material was collected, since the demands on the biology students were practically all in the oral mode.

The data collected were used by the project members to explore the exchange students' experiences, the discourse world and the linguistic problems they encounter in the new environment, from different angles and using different methods. One of the aims of the project was to try out different approaches to these questions. Consequently, the articles in this issue range from an overview of the information available to the students in various guide books to a fairly detailed linguistic analysis of one aspect of the students' written texts.

Reports from the project

In the first paper, Anna Mauranen surveys the study genres that students encounter in the universities of Kent and Jyväskylä, and the communication problems that exchange students have. The discourse types, or genres, that are used in the two universities, differ much more from one another than might be inferred from looking at the names of the genres; what is understood by a 'seminar' or an 'essay' is specific to the culture. These culture-specific notions give rise to much of the communicative difficulties that exchange students experience. It is not a lack of knowledge of the code of English, that is, lexis and grammar or appropriate phraseology, which presents problems, but using this knowledge for participating appropriately in discourses. If the adaptation of foreign students into new study environments is to be made smoother, we need to raise awareness of language as discourse and of the cultural differences in discourses.

Ari Huhta focuses on testing the students' English proficiency. He has developed a self-assessment scale by modifying widely used international proficiency tests, and after trying it out with the students finds the results encouraging: students' self-assesment seems relatively reliable if it is based on clear guidelines, and the close correspondence of the scale with international tests in current use makes it informative for both students and others who need information on their level of language proficiency. More generally, Huhta shares an important conclusion with some other papers in this volume (Nordlund et al and Mauranen): language tests should not play a major role in the selection of students for exchange programmes. Language tests should only filter out those students whose general language skills do not meet the minimum required for study abroad. The difficulties that exchange students encounter in their foreign language communication does not fall within the domain of a narrowly-defined language proficiency, which of course is the usual target of language testing.

Raija Markkanen looks at the students' essays from the point of view of metadiscourse used in them. She compares the Finnish students'

English essays with those written by the same students in Finnish and those of the British students. In the study, metadiscourse is defined as the linguistic material that does not add anything to the factual information but directs the reader in the interpretation of the content. A suitable amount of metadiscourse is a necessary part of any text, but how much of it is needed seems to depend on the genre of the text. The analysis shows that Finnish students have no great problems in the use of metadiscourse when writing in English but that their occasional clumsiness in its use contributes to the overall impression of an essay and consequently to its evaluation.

Sabine Ylönen compares the communicative situations that biology students encounter at the universities of Jyväskylä and Bonn, focusing specifically on the genre "studentisches referat", which is a paper read by students as part of an intensive course. The comparison indicates a major difference in the general mode of communication: in Bonn almost all study situations involve oral discourse, whereas in Jyväskylä the written mode dominates. It is therefore suggested that awareness of the scientific communication culture is as important as those skills which are usually considered linguistic, that is lexis, grammar, and phraseology, and that this awareness should be included in preparatory language courses.

Markku Helin and Janne Hopeela report on the information that is available to students in the various guidebooks that universities provide for new students. They have looked at the material at Jyväskylä and Kent, and this survey confirms the impression from the interviews that different things are required from students' communication in the Finnish and the English system. Moreover, it appears that the guidance given to Jyväskylä students in written documents is even more meagre than that offered to Kent students, in particular as concerns the 'how' of university studies, that is, things like study habits and skills, and what the different modes of study mean. While this report provides a useful background to the comparisons of discourses which actually take place in the universities, it leaves open the question of where and how students learn what is expected of them. If it is not very explicitly explained in the guidebooks, it must come from somewhere else.

The present volume gives some answers to the question of cultural differences in study genres between British/German and Finnish university systems and the problems Finnish students encounter when studying abroad. It also proves the usefulness of interviews as a method of approaching these problems, in particular if it is combined with linguistic analysis. It further shows that self-assessment, if planned carefully, is valuable in evaluating the sufficiency of students' language skills. The reports also suggest that knowledge of the linguistic code is not enough but that the real problems lie elsewhere, in the lack of required communicative skills, which may differ in two cultures. It is the

knowledge of these cultural differences that the students need more than training in language skills before they go abroad.

The project Communication in International Student Exchange was limited in being a case study of only seven students. Its results could be tested by using a larger number of subjects. However, even as it is, the material collected offers possibilities for further analyses. The written material can be used for the analysis of text structure and argumentative style, the recorded seminar sessions for analysing spoken argumentation and discourse structure.

We hope that the contents of the present volume will stimulate new research in the area and provide help for those who are involved in preparing students for exchange programmes.

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And last but not least we wish to thank the students who constituted our sample, for their excellent cooperation, their permission to record their talk and use their texts, and their patience in answering interview questions on several occasions, and filling in many questionnaires.

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Anna Mauranen Raija Markkanen

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TWO DISCOURSE WORLDS: STUDY GENRES IN BRITAIN AND FINLAND

Anna Mauranen

1 INTRODUCTION

Discourse, that is, the use of language in social contexts, is of fundamental importance in education, because we learn not only new things through discourses in all educational contexts, but also new discourses and discourse types. Discourse types, or genres, embody socially appropriate ways of expressing and transmitting knowledge and learning. Educational genres develop, get established, and change in the institutional settings they are used in, and are thereby part of the institutional culture. Students are expected to acquire the genres relevant to their studies, even though these are not necessarily explicitly taught, at least not in all their aspects.

The discourse universe that a first-year student encounters at university may be something of a culture shock, because the university institution cultivates its own distinctive discourses types which are not used in the outside world. Later, however, the acquisition of new, related genres presumably runs more smoothly. An exchange student undergoes a second culture shock - not only because the language and culture in the new country are different in general, but also because the university itself is different. The way language is used for writing and speaking in study

contexts involves different expectations, end products, and values from the home environment, although often under deceivingly similar labels.

This paper explores the major genres that involve students in their study environments at Jyväskylä and Kent. The main concern is to look at intercultural differences in study genres and how these are interpreted by the participant groups, that is, students and teachers. The dominant angle is one of the required response from a student; in other words, what discourse the student must produce in response to ongoing discourses and other situational demands. Student and staff interpretations of the discourses are discussed and compared.

In addition, questions specific to foreign students' language use are addressed: do foreign students have special problems with study discourses, and if so, what are they and what role does their command of the foreign language play in the problems?

This paper falls into two main parts after presenting the general assumptions behind it (Section 2): the first major part (Section 3) is an overview of the main study genres at Kent and Jyväskylä, and the second part (Sections 4 to 6) takes a closer look at the ways in which participants, that is students and teachers, interpret these discourses and how the foreign students cope with the new genres.

2 BACKGROUND ASSUMPTIONS

It is commonly assumed that the general conception of a university, its mission and goals in society are more or less uniform all over the world, at least in western societies (see e.g. Koski 1993). This assumption seems often to be implicitly extended to more specific institutional goals and practices in universities as well. However, institutional structures and organizational practices, like administrative and degree systems, examination systems, etc., differ markedly across countries (e.g. Clark 1983). It seems reasonable to assume that this variation is not only of a structural or mechanical kind, but that it in fact also reflects culture-specific features of educational systems and educational ideologies. One way of looking at this variation at the level of mundane everyday practices is to look at the typical discourses, or genres, that are used in universities in different countries. Study genres constitute essential means of socialisation and education, and should therefore be highly informative on the tacit knowledge required and transmitted in a particular university system.

The acquisition of academic discourses, or genres, is not merely a question of grammatical or lexical or stylistic knowledge, but a

communicative and social competence which involves the ability to use language appropriately in different situations. Mastery of academic discourses also indicates how far a student has internalised the tacit knowledge of the community. As Väliverronen (1992: 25) puts it, he or she must be able to use situationally appropriate discourses. To do so requires skills of presenting "valid arguments", "insightful questions", or "sharp criticism", as well as a notion of the grounds on which questions are to be answered or "good" argumentation or criticism is to be based on. Such skills are tested in various teaching situations, examinations, and in writing up research.

Most people would perhaps these days not quarrel with the idea that knowledge is constituted in academic discourse, not merely communicated by it. More grenerally, language does not merely 'reflect' society, but has an important role in shaping and constructing our social reality (c.f. Berger and Luckmann 1966, and more recently e.g. Cameron 1990, Stubbs 1992). At the same time, language, and its use as discourse, incorporates and mediates non-linguistic facets of culture and social order, both in terms of meanings ("content") and form (ways of speaking, kinds of discourses, genres). Thus the ways in which we speak or write, or the kinds of discourses we use, are a central element of our culture. When we learn them we learn meanings and ways of behaving in our social environment.

A basic assumption here is, then, that study genres exert an important influence in the socialisation process of students, first into a student role, and later into full-fledged professionals. This is similar to the line taken earlier by Miller (1984: 165):

> what we learn when we learn a genre is not just a pattern of forms or even a method of achieving our own ends. We learn, more importantly, what ends we may have... ...for the student, genres serve as keys to understanding how to participate in the actions of a community...

Genres thus extend their domain of influence beyond situationally appropriate language use: they represent the university community to students, and shape their notions of their roles as students and as future professionals.

Study genres in the present study mean types of discourses which are central and established in study contexts. More generally, a genre is understood as a class of discourses which have the same primary social function, and which tend to display typical lexicogrammatical and textual features. Genres distinguish social groups by selecting people in terms of who are allowed or obliged to use them and who are not (Mauranen 1993b). Moreover, it is relevant here to assume, following Swales (1990), that they are also recognisable to at least expert members of the community that uses them.

With respect to the student's role as either a recipient or a producer of discourse, two basic functions of study genres can be distinguished: those which involve the student as a recipient and those which students are expected to produce. The first category includes lectures, tutorials, textbooks etc. These genres transmit concepts and facts which are to be learned as "knowledge", provide direct guidance of the student's activities, as well as offer discourse models to be emulated, including the appropriate linguistic wrapping for the knowledge packages. The second category comprises such genres as term or seminar papers, essays, theses, etc., which are used as a basis for assessing the student's performance and progress towards the institutional goals.

For purposes of describing students' production, it is useful to divide study discourses into two classes of mode, written and spoken. However, in practice the written and the spoken intermingle in various ways. This may be related to the special status of writing in the academic research community: research needs to be published in order to qualify as proper research. Something of this status also appears to seep down to undergraduate studies: it is largely through the written mode that qualifications are granted. Moreover, the presence of writing is felt in many spoken genres. For instance, although lectures are orally delivered, students make written records of them for their own later purposes, which often involve written work. Again, lecturing is largely based on published written work, and references to such sources are made as a matter of course during the lecturing. The written mode thus looms behind most speaking in academic contexts. We speak about what we have read or written, and what others have written; we speak what we are going to write about, and so on.

Another background assumption in this study was that the central study genres reflect the institutional aims of university education, which in many respects are similar at least in all European countries, but which can also be expected to show some culturally characteristic differences in Britain and Finland. The cultural variablity assumption was suggested by earlier studies (e.g. Mauranen 1993a, 1993b, Ventola & Mauranen 1990), which indicated that different rhetorical practices prevail in the written discourse of mature academics in Finnish and Anglo-American cultures. Comparisons between for example German and English academic texts have yielded similar results (e.g. Clyne 1987). If established academics show cultural differences, it makes sense to assume that these reflect differences at the earlier stages of professional socialisation, that is, during undergraduate studies. Research into student writing at various educational levels in other countries (e.g. Kaplan 1966, and many articles in Connor and Kaplan (eds.) 1987 and in Purves (ed.) 1988) would seem to support such an assumption in that student texts also show cultural variation.

The exchange year, by removing students from their odinary environment, puts them in a problem situation where they will have to change some of their discourse expectations and strategies. The students will have to be sensitive to a new set of demands on their discourse, which differs in some respects from their so far acquired practices. It can be assumed that their awareness of the academic community and its discourses is heightened in this situation, and that they therefore provide a fruitful source of information on study genres.

Students' awareness and descriptions of the major genres can also be expected to show some cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary variability, so that Finnish and British students may describe (and perceive) study discourses in somewhat different ways, as may students of different subjects. Moreover, their interpretations and descriptions concerning genres are expected to differ somewhat from those by university teachers, and from those manifest at the institutional level, represented in various university documents.

This study is mainly based on interview material, described in the Introduction to this volume, but it also draws insights from the seminar observations and the students' writing in both countries.

3 MAJOR STUDY GENRES IN A FINNISH AND A BRITISH UNIVERSITY: AN OVERVIEW

The most common study genres at both Kent and Jyväskylä are known under very similar names. These were readily recognised and described by all interviewee groups, and found in the various documents (see also Helin and Hopeela, this volume): seminar, lecture, and examination. The only major difference discernible by a superficial look was among written genres: the essay was very common in Britain but not in Finland, whereas the seminar paper was common in Finland but nonexistent as a written genre in Britain. However, despite the generally similar names, the genres constituted clearly different systems in the two universities. A simple figure may be useful in giving the overall picture:

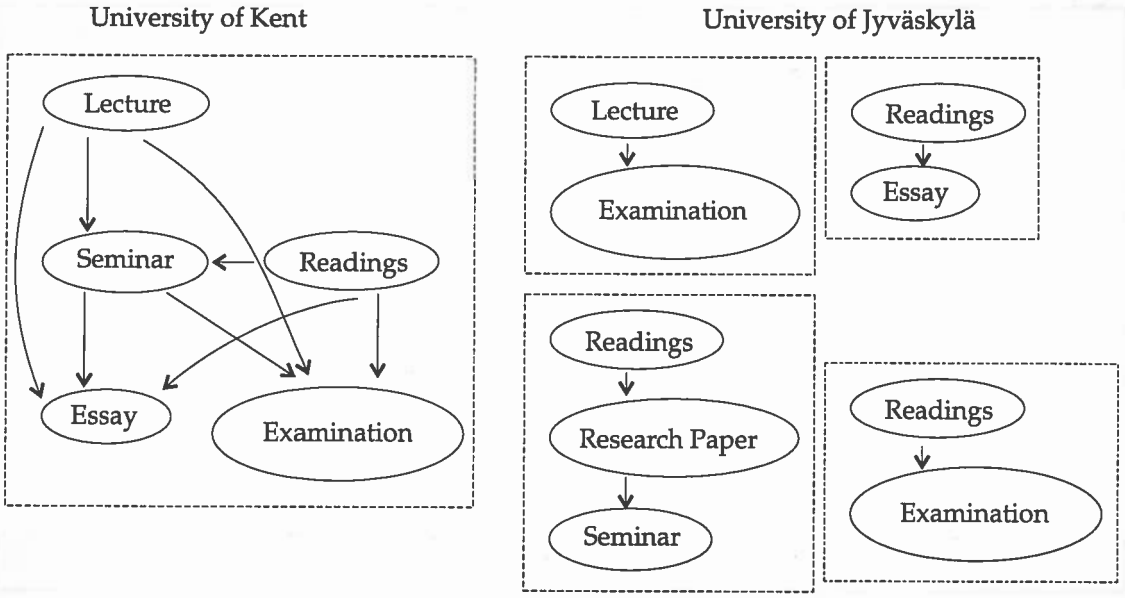

FIGURE 1: Major study genre systems at the universities of Kent and Jyväskylä

As Figure 1 helps illustrate, the structuring of study genres is different in many ways at Kent and at Jyväskylä. In the English (Kent) system, each unit known as a "course" is a cluster of very closely interlinked genres. A certain number of these make up a year, and three completed years constitute the degree. The Finnish (Jyväskylä) system consists of smaller course units, each covering one or two discourse types only, but the units combine into larger wholes which constitute stages in the study system, and completing all the stages earns a degree.

The Kent genres are linked in each course unit through a common topic area, while the Jyväskylä system comprises separate units which are not very closely connected. Most of the Jyväskylä courses have their own examinations, but the biggest examinations are separate from lecture courses and seminars, based solely on reading lists. Thus, despite the smallish-looking difference in genre labels, the functions of the genres appear rather different, and suggest that the systems constitute different wholes.

The next section will discuss in more detail the genres which came up in the interviews. The written and spoken modes are taken up separately, and in each subsection British genres are discussed first, beginning with teachers' views, followed by those of students, and then Finnish genres are discussed in the same way.

3.1 Written genres

The written genres that were discussed in greatest length and detail by the interviewees in all groups were those which required the student to write. All along, students' reading was treated as an auxiliary to writing or speaking, and hardly ever mentioned on its own.

3.1.1 The essay

At Kent, essays are compulsory written assignments for a course. Essay topics reflect the subject matter of the course, and are mainly provided by the teacher, with some possibilities for choice by students. Essays are written for the teacher who comments on them in writing, and they receive marks which count towards student evaluation.

In the teacher interviews, essays were a prominent genre: they were discussed by all interviewees and described in a relatively uniform way. Despite individual variation in wording and emphasis, a common pattern emerged readily.

The essay was primarily seen as an answer to a question. Six out of eight teachers said this, and the remaining two that it is developing an argument. What distinguished the ordinary essay from the outstanding one was that the former was basically described as a competent summary of the issues, showing evidence of relevant reading and thinking, being written in a coherent way and reporting sources according to academic tradition. The outstanding essay was to show originality in addition to the other qualities.

More specifically, although students' personal views and opinions were mentioned as generally desirable traits in essays, they were particularly emphasised as distinguishing the really good essays from ordinary but good ones: "critical insight", perceptive comments", independent thought" and "originality" were attributes given to essays seen as deserving the highest marks.

The English students felt that an essay required them to show their knowledge of the topic area, that is, having done some reading, and also to indicate good understanding of the topic. They also said that one was supposed to show a critical attitude towards what had been read. It was felt that interpretations, argumentation, and a balanced view of the topic were generally appreciated. One student mentioned original ideas, but doubted whether those were really appreciated by teachers. Another said that your own ideas were appreciated if you were able to give good reasons for them. The ideas of originality and independent thought that teachers put forth was thus much less clear in the students' answers.

The Finnish exchange students had even less certain ideas than their English peers on essays. They generally felt that they had not been

told what an essay was or how it should be written; only one student referred to the study guide materials they had been given. The general conception of an essay was that one was expected to do some reading from the reading list, discuss the facts and views found in the readings, and express their own views of the issues. The students emphasized the requirement for personal views and interpretations of the issues. They felt this was different from Finland, and expressed some anxiety at the perceived need to think of your own interpretations and provide reasons for them. This question will be taken up in more detail in Section 5.2. below.

In Finland, an essay is mostly written as an alternative to a course or an examination. Every essay is negotiated on an individual basis between a teacher and a student. The contrast with the English system is clear here: In Finland, you either do a course or an essay, while in England you do essays routinely as part of a course. On the other hand, the written assignment that is of major importance in the Finnish system is the written seminar paper, which is not known in England.

At Jyväskylä, then, the essay was much less prominent than at Kent, and the staff members had relatively vague and varied views on what an essay should be like. Most Jyväskylä teachers explicitly distinguished the essay from a seminar paper by pointing out that an essay is based on a literature review, while a seminar paper reports original research. Two of the teachers further distinguished between a summary and an essay: an essay was to present personal evaluations or applications in addition to summarising the reading. The literature department distinguished study essays from literary essays, and the English department required students to write what they called compositions: short essays on set topics and readings (what some of the students called "little essays", c.f. Markkanen, this volume).

What teachers most frequently said they required from an essay was a summary of the reading, together with clarity, conceptual accuracy, and showing an understanding of the main issues and the essential content of the materials read. The requirements were thus clearly different from the "answer to a question" or "developing an argument" at Kent, although the Finnish teachers' requirements were also included in many British teachers' answers .

A particularly good or desirable essay was characterised as one showing width and depth of reading, an ability to contextualise the topic in a wider perspective, personal assessment, thinking, applications, and insight. Thus, in addition to requiring more of the same as in an ordinary essay, the teachers hoped for a personal touch from the student, but in a more cautious or vague way than British staff.

The students felt that essays were relatively common as a form of study in Finland, but did not describe them in much detail. This was probably partly due to the nature of the first students' questionnaire. The

most common characterisation of an essay was that it is a summary of the literature which also includes some opinions of your own. Otherwise the students of different subjects made different comments. The student of psychology said that you choose a problem or a point of view, and support your discussion with references to the literature. The literature student emphasised that an essay measures your ability to apply your knowledge, and how well you had internalised what you had read. He also felt it was a good thing if you were able to develop personal views on the issues, and added that it is possible to criticise earlier research if you can provide good grounds for your criticism. The students in communication studies merely said that it had not been made clear to them what an essay is or what is required in one.

3.2 The seminar paper

The written seminar paper is relatively central, traditional, and well known to teachers and students in Finland. The papers are often much longer than English essays, and take the conventional form of a research report. They are commonly divided into subsections which correspond to an introduction - methods - materials - results - discussion format. The papers are usually copied to all seminar participants who are to read them before the session.

To the Finnish university teachers the seminar paper appeared to be a much more familiar genre than the essay, and its descriptions converged more. The seminar paper was distinctly described as a report of a piece of research, and scholarly standards were emphasised both in the reporting and the carrying out of the research.

The goal of the seminar paper was seen as teaching scientific or scholarly thinking and reporting. A good seminar paper was expected to show good ability in delimiting the topic, handling the source materials, and using the academic conventions of the discipline. The teachers stressed the importance of the content, both in the paper itself and in the ensuing seminar discussion, although they also said it was important to learn the correct forms of resarch reporting.

The students felt that the seminar paper was an infrequent genre, in comparison to examinations and essays, since they usually did about one a year. They characterised the seminar paper as a scholarly exercise, which students do either individually or in pairs. The literature student was a little more explicit than the others, and said that the seminar paper should be a coherent, exhaustive, and well motivated survey of the topic, and that it is important to delimit the topic area, the point of view and the method adopted. The student answers were rather meagre again, since the questions did not invite them to dwell upon the topic.

Comparing their remarks to those of the teachers, it nevertheless appears that the seminar paper is important even though not frequent, and that the students do not get much practice in writing seminar papers. Rather than a common form of academic writing practice, the seminar paper is a way towards research, and other, longer research reports, eventually the master's thesis.

3.1.3 Examinations

Examinations in England take place at the end of the academic year. They are usually three-hour written examinations, where the questions reflect the topics of the course, that is topics that have been taken up in the lectures, seminars, and essays.

The Kent teachers appeared confident about their ideas of examining. They did not describe what is generally involved, but rather referred to examinations as to common knowledge, as "standard", or "traditional", three-hour sit-in written exams.

It was commonly assumed that students had a good broad idea of what the questions would be about, since the examinations were based on the course. What was then expected was that students would be able to rearrange the material that had been covered during the course, in a relevant answer to a given question:

> "They pretty much know what the questions are going to be about, but not what the question's going to be, so they'll have to be able to focus or organise what they know to answer that question".

General requirements in examination answers were similar to those in essays: answering the question asked, arguing well, showing knowledge of the material, and doing some thinking. Descriptions of particularly good answers emphasised independent thinking, critical thinking, and originality. Good presentation skills came up quite frequently as a requirement, as for example in

> "In a 3-hr exam you don't expect a great length, but you expect relevance, sharpness, clarity, conciseness, backed up of course by information, knowledge, evidence".

In contrast to teachers, the British students' ideas about examinations were vague and varied: one thought less knowledge was required than in an ordinary essay, another felt that more was required, and a third that the same things were required as in essays. The fourth student said simply that she did not know how they were marked, since exam scripts are not handed back with comments. The exchange students had no experience of British examinations and little idea of what they might be like.

The Finnish university system has a number of major and minor examinations, which can be taken at different times. The major examinations are normally book examinations, that is, there is a list of set readings, which is in part negotiable, and a sit-in examination with questions on the books. Such examinations are organised a few times a year, and students can choose when to take them, if they have acquired the necessary credits that serve as a prerequisite for taking a particular exam. Minor examinations related to lecture courses or sometimes to restricted topics based on reading take place throughout the academic year, linked to the teaching schedules.

Like their English colleagues, Jyväskylä teachers appeared familiar with and confident about examining. They all mentioned the book examination, and described the requirement as showing knowledge of the facts from the reading. Particularly good examination answers were characterised with a little more variation: some teachers expressed primarily content-related wishes, such as analysis, extra knowledge, and applying the factual knowledge. One teacher mentioned thinking, but hastened to add that this is not really possible in practice. Some teachers also mentioned features of expession, such as literary values (in literature), and clarity, such as clear handwriting.

Finnish students reported that examinations were common, but said little else. The common view was that the emphasis is on the content, and that it is important to remember the essential facts from the reading. One student drew a distinction between departments: in the department of Finnish, exact knowledge is required, while in philosophy it is important to discuss issues and give your own views.

The interviews focused very much on the major genres. Less common ones needed special prompting, but mainly came up in the first Finnish students' questionnaire. The Finnish students mentioned at least one further type of written discourse each, but they were described as rare and were different from one another. Two students mentioned a summary paper, which they felt was a summary of the main points of a longer original text. Other genres mentioned were book review, newspaper article, research report, and radio talk.

3.2 Spoken genres

The most important spoken genre in both universities seemed to be the seminar. In both systems it is the best established, and often the only, situation in which the norm has it that students must speak. The obligation to speak is not accompanied by sanctions very much, but it is generally understood that discussion should be conducted and that

students should participate. This is not merely a tacit understanding, but appears to be explicitly stated at the outset of most seminar courses.

3.2.1 The seminar

Seminars at Kent are weekly sessions of one or two hours, accompanying a lecture series. Attendance is compulsory. Input to the discussion comes from the suggested reading associated with set topics, as well as from the lectures. The course teachers select the topics and readings, and as seminar leaders they act as chairpersons.

The seminar was discussed at quite some length by Kent teachers, although they were slightly less explicit and clear about its goals than they were about the essay or examination. The general picture which emerges is that they see seminars as primarily discussion sessions, whose purpose is, firstly, to discuss students' views on the topics set by the teacher, and secondly, to provide an opportunity for clarifying difficult and unclear issues to students. One of the lecturers summarised the pedagogical goal of the seminars as giving students a chance to "give voice to their half-formulated ideas".

What was generally expected from students was that they should participate in the discussion, showing evidence of having done the reading, and having thought about it. Some teachers emphasised the clarifying function of the discussion, and saw students' questions as a good sign of preparation for the seminar. Others put more emphasis on the students' ability to think and argue. Showing interest in the topic was also appreciated, and a lively discussion, with disagreement, interest, and argumentation of issues, preferably taking place between students, seemed to be a desirable end in itself. The teacher's role was seen mainly as that of a discussion leader, by one teacher also as a critic, spurring them to think and argue better. Some seminars had a student presentation in the beginning of the session. The presentation was to be relatively short, cover the main issues, and get a discussion started on the topic.

The British students recognised the general idea of a seminar as a forum for discussion, as well as the requirement of reading. They felt that teachers appreciated it if you had something to say, and if you were able to relate your own experiences to the topics discussed. Two students said that sometimes discussions would go on without the teacher, even continue outside the classroom. One student thought this would be welcomed by the teachers who then would not have to do all the talking.

Yet the most common comment on seminars from students, both British and Finnish, was that they vary a great deal, depending on the seminar leader. Some seminar leaders were reported to take care that students would talk, others would be content with talking themselves for

50 minutes out of 60. Other variable features were gentleness versus toughness of the discussion.

Most of the exchange students felt they had not been told very clearly what was expected of them; two mentioned reading, and one that attendance was obligatory. Two described discourse expectations: one said that students were expected to express their views as much as possible, and that argumentation was appreciated. The other student thought that speaking a lot was appreciated, and that this resulted in a great deal of superficial talk in seminars. The purpose of seminar presentations was not very clear either - presentations were described as boring monologues, often read from a paper. Only one student said that the presentation was to start the discussion going.

Despite the reported unclarity, the students were able to make a large number of comparisons between Finnish and English seminars, on the basis of their perceptions of typical features in both systems. These will be returned to in Section 5.1.

At Jyväskylä, the seminar is generally a course type of its own, consisting of weekly sessions for usually one term. At the centre of attention is a seminar paper written by each student in turn, and the sessions usually consist in discussing one or two of these papers.

The main participants in the discussion are usually the occupants of the roles of respondent and opponent. The roles determine a number of the discourse moves that the role occupants are to make: the respondent is to start with a short introduction of the paper, then the opponent normally takes a long turn with general evaluative comments, and then others may come in. The seminar leader acts as the chair.

There is some variation to this basic seminar pattern, depending in part at which stage of studies the seminar takes place. The basic seminar type belongs to advanced level studies, usually immediately before and around MA thesis writing. Some intermediate stage seminars are called proseminars, others praktikums. These teaching forms may deviate a little from the basic seminar format, but because of their similarity, and because the interviewees usually discussed them together, they are discussed as one group here.

The Finnish staff saw seminars as serving important pedagogical purposes: first of all, they would provide feedback to students on their work, and secondly, they would help prepare students for the writing of longer research papers. In support of the pedagogical usefulness, some teachers pointed out that the papers presented later in the course tend to be better than the earlier ones.

What the teachers brought up as important in seminar discussions was that participants should make their contributions relevant to the topic at hand. It was emphasised that students should be able to take up important and central issues in each other's papers, and that they should be able to defend their own work and their claims well. Everyone's

participation in the discussion was not a self-evident requirement: in fact only two teachers said they expected this. One of the others made a point of saying that students in his field were mainly oriented towards written communication, often very shy about speaking, and that they should not be made to feel under pressure to speak in seminars.

The Finnish students said that seminars were not very common, but they rated them highest among spoken genres in terms of meaningfulness. They thought seminars were very good for learning, although not very easy forms of study. They particularly welcomed the discussion and feedback. They also pointed out that the teacher plays a major role: some seminars are better and more motivating than others depending on the teacher. The students did not thus appear to share the teachers' conception that speaking is unnerving and difficult. Of course, the student sample was small here, and the teachers' experience probably covers a wider spectrum of student attitudes.

3.2.2 The lecture

The lecture is a regular part of a course at Kent, although voluntary to the students: it is a series of talks given by a member of the staff on a topic area, followed by a seminar session on a related topic.

Lectures received much less comment from the teachers than seminars, although they were mentioned in the prompt question. They were described chiefly as providing information on the topic, and also as an opportunity for lecturers to interpret topics and explain concepts for students, give different perspectives, show difficult problems, and orientate student reading. The teachers said that lectures were for the students' benefit. Another aspect of their purpose in student-teacher interaction was seen in transmitting teacher views and expectations to students:

> "The point about lectures really is that students want to know what the organisers of his course are looking for, and lectures tell them precisely that, what the course is about in the eyes of people who teach it, and, more bluntly, in the eyes of the people who are going to examine it".

The student's role was seen as one of a listener who takes notes. The students recognised the role reserved for them, and felt lectures were useful for disseminating facts, especially at the early stages of study. Some lectures were felt to give a good general introduction to a topic, or an overview of the issues, and hints for reading. Interestingly, the Finnish exchange students gave a much more favourable evaluation to English than Finnish lectures.

The reasons given for this difference were to do with presentation style, which the students described as lively as opposed to a dull recital

from a written paper, reportedly typical at Jyväskylä. The lectures are also shorter at Kent, and according to the comments contained fewer details and facts. Some said that Kent lecturers were more critical towards the theories and approaches they were discussing, which left more space for students to think for themselves, others felt that their integration of several sources into a personal interpretation was enjoyable. What was common in the accounts was that the positively evaluated lectures were felt to result in new understanding or insight on the part of the student.

The Finnish lecture course is built on similar principles as in Britain, but is usually followed immediately by a written examination. The Jyväskylä staff saw lectures as an important, efficient way of teaching especially at the early stages of studies. This is exactly what students said in Britain. Lecturing was seen as a way of saving resources when certain basic concepts and facts were to be taught to all students. The students' task was listening and taking notes, as at Kent. The department of communication studies differed from the others in that it emphasised the need to encourage discussion during lectures. This was felt to be important because it would encourage a speculative attitude and teach students to look at things from different angles.

The Finnish students, talking about lectures in Finland, saw as their purpose the transmission of knowledge. Lectures were described as a passive genre from the student's point of view, where participation by means of questions or discussion did not seem worth the effort. In general, students gave a low evaluative rating to lectures. They were not regarded as meaningful or motivating, or useful as a means of learning. Yet they were considered to be easy. The students said that they tried to avoid them. Despite the criticism, some students conceded that some lectures are better than others - this was seen to depend on the lecturer mainly, but it was also mentioned that some topics are more suitable for being lectured on than others.

3.3.3 Other

Teachers at both universities have weekly office hours when students can go and see them. Three teachers mentioned these consultation hours, but only one said he saw students frequently on these occasions, as they came to discuss essay topics or extended essays. The other two gave rather dismissive mentions:

> "Of course students can come for a chat, but there are so many students these days..."

The British students said that they did not use this opportunity much. They were unable to give a reason:

"They are available, but I don't go. I don't know why."

The weekly consultation hour system is similar at Jyväskylä, where the teachers did not seem to attach much importance to it. Their main function was seen as that of giving individual feedback on for example seminar paper plans, and negotiating essay topics.

Another genre that was brought up by students at Jyväskylä was group work, which they described as a relatively common spoken genre. This was very highly appreciated, felt to be very motivating, conducive to learning, and also very easy. Group discussions were also mentioned by students of journalism and psychology. The teachers did not discuss either group work or group discussions.

3.3 Summary and comparison of the main study genres

The most frequently mentioned and most confidently described study genres in the interviews were the seminar, the lecture, the examination, the essay, and the seminar paper, which were already described in the overall picture above (Figure 1). The interviews thus give rise to the general impression that the study genres with the same names in a British and a Finnish university share a number of features, but also that the identical labelling should not be trusted: different traditions and expectations accompany the familiar genre labels in each culture. Moreover, genres do not always have equivalents in the other system, as for example in the case of the essay vs. the seminar paper. The common genre labels serve to reveal similarities but at the same time hide differences.

A common feature to both universities appeared to be the centrality of the written mode in student assessment. At Kent, students on most courses could improve their course marks a little with active participation in discussions, but the course mark, which also included essays, was altogether only 20 % of the final mark. The main weight of evaluation was on the written examinations at the end of the year. In Jyväskylä the situation was similar: relevant spoken contributions were expected from students, but they were not given an official status in assessment.

Overall, there appears to be more written work done in the normal course of studies in Britain, in particular writing which is done outside the classroom, but with a time limit. The undergraduate in Finland appears to write mainly examination answers, and about one research paper for a seminar every year. The other writing tasks seem more varied and sporadic. It seems that Finnish students produce less

text, but what they write is more varied in type than the British students' writing, which focusses very much on just one type, namely the essay.

Despite the obvious difference in frequency, the central written genres of student output seem to be the essay in Britain and the seminar paper in Finland. The English essay then is mainly represented as an answer to a question, while the Finnish one is a summary of the readings. They both value reading and academic reporting conventions, but the starting point and focus are different: if the purpose is to answer a question, the reading will be done and summarised from the vantage point of the question or an issue, whereas if the purpose is to summarise the reading, the reading will be done from the vantage point of the given texts. The difference is clearly seen in staff descriptions of good but ordinary essays: in Britain, they were depicted as summaries of the issues, in Finland as summaries of the books (or other texts). The outstanding essay was also seen differently: in Britain it was one which was as close to originality as possible, in Finland one showing width and depth of reading, together with an ability to contextualise the issues. The Finnish seminar paper, again, is a small research report, and clearly emphasises scholarly standards in the work and in the writing. It seems, then, that the focus of written work in Britain is on interpreting source materials and arguing for a point, while in Finland it is on indicating the acquisition of relevant knowledge, and reporting original research.

The feedback systems for written work also differ. At Kent essays are written to be read by the teacher only, and students get feedback from the teacher in written notes and comments on each essay. They may also consult the teacher individually (although rarely seem to do so). The student thus learns from the teacher's individual feedback on his or her work.

In contrast, at Jyväskylä students copy their seminar papers in advance to all participants. As the paper is then discussed in the seminar, the student gets feedback from other students as well as the teacher, and often in fact more from the other students. In this system, the student also learns from his or her peers, both from their papers and their feedback. However, for their rare essays, Jyväskylä students get no other feedback than the grade. The amount of feedback thus seems to reflect the relative importance of the genre in the system.

The examination systems reflect the general attitudes of other written work. The Kent teacher views foregrounded the values of relevance, arguing, and thinking, with knowledge as a necessary background variable; the Finnish teachers emphasised knowledge, with additional appreciation of analysis and application. Thinking appeared more as a background feature. It was also interesting that students' answers showed rather vague notions of what examinations were about, and even more so in Britain than in Finland.

In both countries the seminar is the main genre which involves students as speaking participants. The major differences between the seminars were that in Britain the discussion was around a topic, in Finland around a paper. In Britain the preparatory reading was from authorities, not student work like in Finland. The seminars were also a very common form of study, and seminar discussion a central genre from the start. In Finland seminars were regular but infrequent, and did not take place until the middle stage of studies. In addition, all Finnish students bear a notable proportion of the responsibility for the discussion in the roles of opponent and respondent.

Not surprisingly, the participant groups, staff and students, had somewhat different views of the major study genres. But a relatively consistent picture also emerges of two systems, and one gets a strong impression that there is an "underlying" difference in the educational goals and ideals of the two countries. On the whole, the Finnish university system at undergraduate level seems more research-oriented than the British: it appears primarily to be training academics, that is, people who do original research. The British university seems to be more "education-oriented": it appears to train graduates digest and evaluate information from academic research, and express their views on it. We could thus speak of research focus in the Finnish university system as opposed to the educational focus in the British system. The situation may, of course, look different in the natural sciences and technology, but the current data do not cover those fields.

These contrasting ideologies, or philosophies, if you like, which come out of the participants' descriptions of the systems, and on observations of practical instances, may or may not conform to those expressed in official statements of the universities or higher education authorities. This is not important in the present context. The picture of the systems and their ideologies is sketched here on the basis of participants' descriptions of their experience and interpretations, and on researchers' and some of the participants' observations of practical situations. The 'underlying' ideologies which are arrived at in this way as everyday practices and understandings thus reflect the systems at work rather than the systems as planned or intended at some higher levels of educational planning or decision-making.

4 STUDENT AND STAFF INTERPRETATIONS

A much richer variation of interpetations, including tensions and conflicts between groups' and even individuals' representations of genres

and situational demands on discourses is discernible in the interview data than the above general overview suggests. This section will take a closer look at some issues which are relevant to the questions we set out to investigate in this study, most importantly the issue of language proficiency and its role in successful study abroad. Berfore discussing this question, however, some general remarks on the students' and teachers' answering strategies, and their awareness of cultural diferences are in order.

There was an interesting difference in the strategies that students and teachers used in approaching the interview questions. The students would usually start describing a genre by saying that it varies. Rather than saying what, say, a seminar, is, or is like, they would say that it varies - some teachers require this and others that, some instances go like this, others like that. Their focus was thus on the particular rather than the general. Yet, after such initial remarks they would move on to describing genres and situations with apparent certainty, and they made a number of generalisations and comparative observations about the Finnish and English systems without much hesitation. The students would thus move from the particular and variable to the general and typical.

The teachers had a different strategy: they would first provide a general description without much difficulty, but then also give two kinds of modification: (1) their individual interpretation of how the ideal should be implemented (their personal operationalisation of it, as it were), and their own practices, and (2) what tended to happen in practice; as a kind of 'real life' perspective as opposed to the ideal; factors which were often student-related, such as their lack of motivation, or shyness, or incompetence, were frequently implicated in the second stage of the description, that of actual practice. The teachers, then, unlike students, would move from the general, the ideal, to the particular, and at the same time towards the mundane and variable. Both groups used what could be described as two repertoires (on repertoires, see for example Gilbert and Mulkay 1987, Potter and Wetherell 1987). With both groups, one of the repertoires recognised variation, and its cause was attributed to the other group.

The different strategies displayed by students and staff in the interviews can easily be related to the position of the groups in the university system, and their need or wish to represent themselves in an interview. Since students are usually regarded as temporary members of the university community, and their success is dependent on how they are assessed by the particular teachers that come their way, it is natural that they need not be very knowledgeable about the system as a whole, but sensitivity to teachers' individual styles is likely to be rewarded in the course of studies. In contrast, teachers are permanent members of the community, and in a position which both allows and demands them to

judge the success of situations and the performance of other participants - therefore to present a clear idea of their mission and the functions of the different genres is important. Yet, on the basis of their experience they are undoubtedly also very well aware of the contingencies of real-life discourses.

4.1 Cultural Awareness

Awareness of cultural differences appeared to be very low whenever people did not directly have to cope with problems ensuing from such differences. Both students and staff seemed unaware that genres of the same name occupy different positions in different university systems. For instance, the routine questions in the research procedure concerning the typicality of the situation after a seminar session (cf. section 3 above) often caused a reaction of surprise from the teachers, who not infrequently came up with remarks like "aren't they always more or less like this?", and "surely seminars are seminars everywhere". Such comments came from teachers at both ends. Similarly, fewer than half of the Kent teachers said they had instructions for students on how to write essays. The reason was that they believed the students knew this already:

> "At this stage I assume they know, but first year students get instruction in essay writing".

It appears, then, that first-year students are assumed to receive similar guidance in different countries. These remarks seem to reflect a more or less conscous belief that universities are the same everywhere. Perhaps a moment's reflection suffices to convince anyone that this is not likely to be the case - it is not feasible that universities all over the world, or even in the "west", have the same ideals, objectives, and basic formats of teaching. Yet in ordinary everyday practice nobody seems to stop to reflect upon this. In this study, it was only the exchange students who noticed differences, for example in requirements concerning essays and seminars - they were indeed more sensitive to differences than anybody else, as was expected.

However, it was also very interesting to note that although the exchange students were able to observe a number of differences in the discourses they encountered, they never talked about the discourse types or genres in terms of different systems. That is, the kind of synoptic overview presented in Figure 1 above was not accessible to students from their perspective as participants in the system. The synoptic perspective emerged from all the interviews together, as the piecemeal information from all the subject groups was put together. It was then

confirmed by an independent examination of the study guides, which, incidentally, did not actually present an overview either. It seems that the participant's perspective is based on perception of ongoing discourses as they unfold, and focuses on features which are relevant to current needs. There appears to be little need to reflect upon the entire systems that are involved. In this respect the researcher's view is fundamentally different from a participant's view.

5 IS LANGUAGE A PROBLEM FOR EXCHANGE STUDENTS?

One of the foci of this study was the exchange students' possible problems with the foreign discourses, that is, with language use. Therefore the interviews at Kent included a question on whether language was felt to be a problem to the students. The most common response from both students and teachers was that language is not a problem, and that Finnish students are very good at English. However, practically all interviewees in both groups also contradicted this view and implicated foreign-language problems or non-native speaker status when describing typical situations involving foreign students.

For instance, in general the exchange students were not very worried about their English, either before going abroad or during their stay. In the preliminary interview, before leaving home, all students evaluated their command of English as fluent (cf. also Huhta, this volume). They anticipated very few language problems: three felt that writing might be difficult, and two that getting used to the speaking might be something of a problem at the very beginning. Only one student felt that writing would be easier than speaking. Those who anticipated early difficulties believed they would soon disappear. The students were thus initially very confident about their command of the language. Although some of them appeared somewhat less certain during the actual stay in England, those who reported problems said it was not because of their command of English. The students said that they were not penalised for language errors, and that "good English" was not important in essay evaluation, although most teachers corrected language errors.

However, when talking at length about writing, the exchange students disclosed a few problems. Moreover, they did not say very much in seminars, and were aware of this. In this they were similar to earlier exchange students (1990-1991), who answered the Jyväskylä University International office's questionnaire on language difficulties. After the first term most of these students admitted to some language

problems: the biggest problem was difficulty in participating in seminar discussions, and the second biggest was essay writing.

Teachers' answers showed similar variance: although they generally spoke of the high English proficiency of Finnish students, they also referred to their problems with the language, in contexts of both written and spoken communication. Since both students and teachers gave such self-contradictory assessments of the students' language problems, this section will take a closer look at their answers.

5.1 Spoken discourse

Since the exchange students in the sample said practically nothing in seminars, the main issues concerning their spoken discourse centred around attempts at explaining why they did not speak. The teachers appeared to possess two typical sources of explanation: one was student personality, and the other was language proficiency.

The explanation by personality was very common. Several teachers said the seminar contributions depended more on personality than knowledge of language, and used British students' shyness as evidence of this.

> "...non-English students, their speaking varies according to personality, never known a student whose English was so poor that he or she didn't know what was going on and couldn't communicate. Therefore ability and willingness to communicate depends on personality as well as on the command of the language - there are very many English students who are quiet and shy, not very forthcoming"

If the student's personality is the decisive factor in speaking or remaining silent, there is very little a teacher can do about it. Personalities are 'given' in teaching situations, and therefore little responsibility can be allocated to teachers for students' active participation. The personality explanation thus looks very convenient to teachers, although it did not in fact prevent them expressing concern about engaging students in a lively discussion. A somewhat surprising aspect of the personality explanation was that the notion of "personality" was sometimes used as if near-synonymous with something like "national character", as in the last example above and the next two quotations:

> "In seminar contributions, it's the personality more than anything that matters, not knowledge of language. It's very very difficult to make British students talk. If I have continentals there, the chances are it's the continentals who do the talking. And the Americans."

A similar attitude can be seen in the following exchange between the interviewer (I) and a staff member (S):

> I: *Are the most talkative people British students?*
>
> S: Those are who know the material best
>
> I: *So it doesn't depend on language?*
>
> S: Oh, it does. My quietest students are submissive Japanese ladies. However, just the other day she was anxious to say things on a topic that particularly interested her...

Yet, despite this frequent emphasis on personality-related factors, the same people were often willing to understand the difficulties foreigners have on account of their language:

> "They're reluctant to join in the discussion orally sometimes because the fluency required to take part in that sort of conversation, the spontaneity, is more difficult when it's not a language you were brought up to speak".

The foreign language is implicated here as a major factor in not speaking. However, it is interesting to note that although language is being discussed, there is no mention here of such things as grammatical correctness, but "fluency" and "spontaneity", which refer to ways of using the language with ease, not command of the code. One teacher ventured a more elaborate explanation of foreign students' reticence in discussions, which, although essentially based on the students' non-native speaker status, also relies on other things than the command of the linguistic code:

> "Usually the trouble with foreign students is they get a bit behind in the discussion ... makes them prepare more than British students. If you're a bit behind, then you can really contribute effectively if you've thought something already, you know something that you can connect with what's going on. Then foreign students do fine. So, in spoken interaction, those non-native speakers who speak a lot seem to know better what they're talking about than some of the English students."

Most of the teachers expressed positive attitudes towards foreign students and their difficulties, as one might expect in an interview situation. However, sometimes the attitude towards language problems was more negative:

> "Foreign students have problems with language. They don't take notes during lectures, because they can't both follow the lecture and write down. So they just listen... It's all right because they have a handout. I can't see why anyone should write anything down during my lecture."

Here the assumption that the foreign language presents a source of difficulty seems somewhat poorly motivated, as the lecturer goes on to say that taking notes is not necessary during the lectures. This attribution of a problem to foreigners is perhaps rather a reflection of a negative attitude towards foreign students, or a general belief that they have difficulties, based on other grounds than those mentioned here.

Altogether, then, two main sources of foreign students' silence in seminars emerged from the Kent teacher interviews:

(1) most importantly, "personality", which was often referred to as if synonymous with "national character"

(2) command of the language - seen both as playing a role and not playing a role.

The students' explanations were similar to those of teachers, with one notable exception: they observed differences in situational demands, in addition to the usual personality and language proficiency explanations. The reasons given by any one student varied and sometimes contradicted one another but a few reasons recurred frequently in the answers.

The most common issue taken up by students was language proficiency, and whether its insufficiency was felt to be an impediment to participation. Most students felt that lack of linguistic skills held them back. However, two students said that language was not a problem. Yet both of them also said, a little later, that of course it is easier to operate in your mother tongue. These answers are also in accordance with those of the earlier exchange student group of 1990-91, among whom the major difficulty came out as participation in seminar discussions, due to problems with language. The feelings of this group could be summarised thus: they felt that their language use was so clumsy that it prevented them from saying anything despite feeling that they might have something to contribute to the discussion.

The second major reason for silence was personality, again in line with the teachers. Some of the students said they simply were not very talkative persons, and that their communicative style was similar in Finland. For example:

> "Mä oon enemmän kirjallisen ilmaisun henkilö, mielelläni ensin ajattelen ennenku muotoilen, olen huono puhuja, muotoilen mieluummin ajatuksia kirjallisesti"
>
> 'I'm more of a writing kind of person, I prefer to think before I formulate something, I'm not a good talker, I prefer to formulate my thoughts in writing'

Interestingly, this particular student had not anticipated problems in oral communication before she left for England. In the preliminary interview she was very confident of both her skills and courage, and she described herself as not shy about expressing her views. Ii is also of interest to note

that all the three students who made similar comments on their personality, i.e. that they are not very talkative, also each talked in a different context about having difficulties with the foreign language.

The third common reason for remaining silent in seminars was unique to the students. This cluster of reasons could be glossed as the novelty of the situation: the students felt that they were not used to or had not been trained in the kind of discussion that was going on. In other words, the discourse practices, or the way discussion was conducted, was felt to be unfamiliar. One situational aspect that was much commented was the actvity of speaking itself; the degree of student participation was felt to be different from Finland. Finnish school tradition was contrasted with English discussions, and described as one where pupils are expected to keep quiet, except when answering questions.

> "Siihen ei oo sillä lailla kuitenkaan tottunu. On varmaan perua peruskoulusta koska siellä on se tyyli että opettaja opettaa, että kysytään kysymys ja oppilas vastaa"
>
> 'One's not really used to it, it must go back to secondary school, because the idea is there that it's the teacher who does the teaching. They will ask questions and the pupils will answer.'
>
> "Se on ihan niinku selvä seuraus mun mielestä siitä että ku meillä on se turpa kiinni mentaliteetti Suomessa... ei kannusteta puhumaan"
>
> 'It's an obvious consequence of the shut-up mentality in Finland. You're not encouraged to speak.'

Some students were very critical of their school education, as the last quotation above shows. Another situational difference was the slower rhythm in the Finnish speaking culture, which one student brought up:

> "Keskustelukulttuurin ero. Englantilaisessa diskurssissa vastataan hirmu paljon nopeemmin. Suomessa aina sentään sanotaan, mietitään, ja sanotaan. Mutta täällä on jatkuva ilotulitus päällä. Ihmiset pystyy reagoimaan paljon nopeemmin. Mä oon huomannu et ei pelkästään seminaareissa vaan ihan missä tahansa keskustelussa, englantilaisten kanssa puhuminen on vähän niinku hengästyttävää. Heti kun sä lopetat ni siin ei oo mitään taukoo ne alottaa taas puhumaan... kauheen sellasta nopeeta, suomalaiselle vähä outoo ku me ollaan aika sellasii hitaita kuitenki. Jos on hiljasuus ni nää on ihan kauhuissaan että onpas hiljasta. Se on selvä ero"
>
> 'It's a difference in conversation cultures. In English discourse they answer much faster. In Finland you always say something, then think, then say something again. But here it's fireworks going off all the time. People react much faster. I've noticed that this is so not only in seminars, but in any conversation; it's a bit breathtaking to talk to the English. As soon as you stop, there's no pause at all, off they go again. It's a bit strange for Finns, we're rather slow after all. If there's a silence, the people here are quite horrified. That's a clear difference.'

In addition to these remarks on students' participant roles and the general manner of conversation, the students made a number of specific comparisons concerning the Finnish and the British seminar discussion. The exchange students' comparisons of seminar discourses offers a good illustration of a participant's view of differences in two discourse systems. The observations fell readily into three main domains:

1. The topic or focus of discussion are different in Kent and Jyväskylä seminars. In Kent you discuss issues, or thoughts, ideas, opinions, whereas in Jyväskylä you discuss a seminar paper, that is, a student's written report of his or her research.

> "Suomessahan proseminaarit on vaan sitä että arvostellaan sitä työtä ja sehän on sitte sitä että, niinku pilkusta ja jostaki pienistä asioista asioista tota, väitellään yritetään saada keskustelunpoikanen aikaseks. Ja isommista asioista ei niinku välitetä ollenkaa. Täällä niinku sitte kyllä yritetään saaha se niitä isojaki asioita niinku perusteluja ja näkökohtia. Kyllä sitte kysytään ihan mahottomiaki kysymyksiä että niihin ei pystytä vastaamaan, yritetään saaha vaa eri näkökulmia"
>
> 'In Finland the seminars are just assessment sessions of a paper, and that means you are trying to get a discussion going about punctuation and other small details. And there's no attention to bigger issues. Whereas here they're trying to bring in big things, too, like reasons and points of view. Of course it also leads to asking impossible questions, too, which you cannot answer, just trying to get different viewpoints.'

2. The amount and manner of the discussion are different. In Kent people talk more, the discussion is faster, more active and intense, and there is more debate and disagreement than in Finland. Debates occur both between students and between students and teachers more than in Jyväskylä.

> "Kyllä täällä keskimääräistä enemmän ihmiset keskustelee, sanoo mielipiteensä kyllä väittäsin näin, eihän Suomessa pystytä seminaaritilanteessa ei pystytä niin paljon sanomaankaan ees kaikkia asioita koska se proseminaarissa se asia keskittyy siihe paperiin ja siinä nyt
> sitte keskustellaan vaikka sitte jostain virkkeestäki että tää nyt ei oikein hyvin tätä asiaa kuvaa ja, täällä sitte niinku voi koska se asia, perustuu siihen asiaan, ja ku Suomessa se on se työ tärkee"
>
> 'There's more discussion going on here, on average, people giving their opinions, I'd like to say. In Finland there's less opportunity for saying things, because the discussion focuses on the paper, and then you talk about for instance a sentence, saying this doesn't quite express the point well. But here you can, because it's about the issues, and in Finland it's about the paper.'

3. Notions of what is polite and desirable in a seminar discussion are different. In Kent, debate and disagreement seem acceptable, even teachers' views can be challenged with impunity - English speakers seem

to welcome differences of opinion. Finns try to avoid disagrement because they want to be polite and because disagreement is likely to cause offence. Teacher - student relationships were also perceived to be different by some students: teachers in Finland were more distant and had a clearer authority role, and they were not to be challenged.

> "Niillon semmonen I agree I disagree - tyyli että mielellään sanoo. Suomalaisilla on tavallaan kohteliaampi asenne, koetaan henkilökohtasena loukkauksena semmonen. Niinku varmaan oot huomannu nii proseminaareissa ja semmosissa jos opponentti esittää kritiikkiä nii sitä vähän niinku suttuu että no miten niin ja tällästä näin mutta täällä taas se on ihan normaalia että jos joku sanoo että I disagree nii okei se sitten disagree. Suomessa on vähän erilainen"
>
> 'They [the English] have a sort of style of "I agree, I disagree", they like saying such things. In Finland the attitude is more polite in a way, you take such expressions as personal offences. As you've probably noticed, if an opponent in a seminar or similar occasion criticizes you, you get a little angry and things, but here it's quite normal, if somebody says they disagree, it's okay, they disagree. It's a bit different in Finland.'
>
> "Kyllä siellä [Suomessa] tämmöstä väittelyä tulee mutta ollaan hirveen varovaisia siitä ettei niinku loukata toista ja.. ja ei mun mielestä Suomessa osata niinku keskustella sillä tavalla että... että niinku oltas tiukkoja ja pidettäs se oma mielipide vaan sitä ollaan aina vähän hyssytellään että hah hah hah tuonpas nyt räväkän mielipiteen esiin"
>
> 'Debating of this sort does occur there [in Finland] , but people are very careful not to offend each other, and I don't think people can carry out a discussion so that they stick it out and keep their own views, but they always tone it down by things like ha ha, now I'm saying something provocative.'

Other reasons were also expressed, although more sporadically, and as pointed out earlier, the students usually gave different reasons at different points in the interview. Two students mentioned lack of time - you did not have enough time to get into the discussion. This relates to one of the teacher observations on non-native speakers needing more time, and the student remark on slower conversational rhythm in Finland. Two students said lack of knowledge was a factor - if you did not know enough, you were not able to say anything. On this point, some Finnish students said the British students were better at hiding their lack of knowledge behind their discussion skills - native language ease was thus implicated as compensating for lack of knowledge.

One student said that because the situation was new in the beginning and adjustment was difficult, the only available initial strategy seemed to be to listen, and that then the role just stuck. Only one gave lack of interest in the topic as a reason for not participating, and one was afraid of her opinions sounding stupid in comparison with her knowledgeable and bright fellow students.

What the teachers and students had in common was thus the contradictory views concerning the role of language, and the relatively central role of personality. The major difference between the teachers' understanding of student silence and that of the students themselves was that a very common reason given by the students was the novelty of the situation - the fact that they were not used to this kind of discussion, and the situational and linguistic demands that went with it. This is clearly a cultural difference in genres, in the discourse practices of typical study situations. Obviously, it is something the teachers could not know, unlike the students, but it is interesting that the possibility did not occur to any of them.

5.2 Written discourse

The exchange students reported experiencing some difficulty with written discourses, although not quite as much as with the spoken mode. Most of them felt that they were under strong time pressure with their essays. This is again similar to the 1990 exchange students, many of whom reported that essay writing took an unreasonable amount of time, and that getting the expression right was laborious.

The students also felt they had difficulties in expressing their personal views and arguing for them in essays. The reported difficulty of presenting, and as it seems, also thinking of personal views, is sometimes quite clearly reflected in their writing, as for instance in Example 1 below, which shows the first and the last paragraph of a student's essay. The sentences are numbered as they appear in the extract for ease of reference.

> Is pain real?
>
> (1) Pain is a complex thing. (2) It is a familiar phenomenon to practically every living thing and yet its real being is very hard to define. (3) Pain is not only a physical function. (4) It has its psychological, cultural, and even philosophical dimensions that make it an interesting phenomenon to study. (5) Sciences such as medicine, psychology, anthropology and philosophy have found different aspects about pain. (6) In this essay I try to introduce some researchers thoughts about the nature of pain and its dimensions.
>
> ...
>
> (7) I have brought up thoughts about pain both as an individual and collective phenomenon. (8) I have been discussing its linguistic meaning. (9) I have mentioned its significance for human being in physiological and psychological sense, and its appearance in sociocultural contexts. (10) After this, all that I have found out is that pain affects human existence (and why not all the nature) a great deal. (11) But is it real? (12) I think that is more a matter of belief than a fact that could be proven. (13) Aristotle considered pain as a negative passion. (14) C.S.

> Lewis gave it a religious meaning by saying that it is a call of God for man. (Autton, 3-4) (15) But these are subjective opinions about emotive appearance of pain. (16) Before one could say whether pain is real or not one should know what pain is. (17) And that, defining a concept pain, is a little too high a task for me. (18) All I can say that pain is real enough as far as I am concerned.

Example 1.

In the initial paragraph, the writer expresses an intention to report what others have said about pain (S 6). Towards the end, he appears to feel a need to take a stand on the issue, but sets very high demands on the task (Ss 15-16), and at the same time disqualifies himself for it (S 17). The very last sentence can be read as half-joking; it is not an answer in tone with the preceding text, and could not be taken seriously after the disclaimer in S 17 in any case.

The next example (Ex.2) also shows difficulties in meeting the demand to present personal views on the issues, and in particular expressing them in a natural way. The student appears to be making a considerable effort to include the view and to show that it is there, but the result is rather contrived. The student did not write like this in her Finnish essays. The extracts are from the end of the initial paragraph of the essay, and from the beginning of the last but one paragraph.

> Do the strengths of Piaget's theory overweigh the weaknesses?
>
> ...(1) However, the aim of this essay is not to explain Piaget's theory in detail, but rather to concentrate on those concepts, which often have been attacked. (2) I have divided my essay into three parts. (3) I'll start with his central ideas and continue with the main criticism and the most radical alternatives to Piaget. (4) Finally, I'll introduce some advantages, implications and influences of his theory, and on the basis of all information I'll give my personal point of view.
> ...
> (5) My personal opinion is that some of the criticism is due to misunderstandings. (6) For example...

Example 2.

The metatextual preview of the essay's organisation works quite well until the second clause of S 4 - it is not usual to announce that a personal point of view will be given. This clue is faithfully followed up in S 5, though, which begins the paragraph where this personal view is indeed given. The writer handles the view and support for it quite skilfully. What she mainly seems to have trouble with is the surface expression, a natural way of integrating the view into the text.

Another exchange student said that he had been criticised for lack of argumentation, which he interpreted to mean expressing his own views:

> "Se sano että siitä puuttuu se argumentointi, se sano että tässä on niinku hirveesti asiaa mutta tota, siinä pitäis kai sitten omia mielipiteitä olla enemmän, mutta ehkä mä en sitte pysty ku ei oo tarpeeks tietoo"
>
> 'He said that the argumentation is missing, that there is a lot of substance but, perhaps there should be more of my own views, but perhaps I cannot do it because I don't know enough'

A similar view was expressed by another student who was surprised at the depth of the personal views and insights displayed by her English fellow students. She felt that in order to participate as an equal in the discussions she should have acquired much more knowledge on the issues.

Both of these views seem to imply that you need to know a great deal if you want to develop a personal view- that taking a stand presupposes substantial knowledge. This may reflect the research focus of Finnish higher education, and the serious scholarly and scientific criteria that tend to be used in evaluating seminar papers. This way of thinking tends to push personal views to a somewhat peripheral position, either at a very low or at a very high level of academic thinking: for example in a standard and much used guide to academic writing (Rainio 1968: 114), academic thinking is divided into stages, where the lowest includes recording observations, followed by various stages of systematic and objective analysis until the highest level of scientific thinking is reached, where creativity and unique views emerge, as the final synthesis from original research. If such conceptions of disciplined thinking have been part of the students educational experience, it is not surprising that they find it difficult to develop personal views on academic issues.

One of the exchange students thought that it was particularly difficult to evaluate methods and theories of earlier research in the field, especially those of the classics. This difficulty was recognised by one of the Kent teachers, but referring to students in general, not specifically to foreigners:

> "...also hoping, although does not always happen, that they will have the courage to disagree with the authorities. It's difficult. "

Thus, not all the problems that Finnish students experienced were unique to them. However, the problems they brought up in this context were of the kind that they thought they did not have in Finland. The students also felt that writing was easier for British students, who also appeared to do it much faster. The reasons suggested for this were (a) that they knew the system already and were used to it, and that (b) they had no difficulties with the language.

The teaching staff at Kent was less willing to grant that Finnish students had problems with written language than with spoken language. That is, their comments on the skill level tended to be very positive:

> "My recollection of students from Finland is that their command of written English is very good indeed. The reason is very simple: they have been taught to use English at school in a formal, structured way. Their formal command of written English tends to be very good. I've never found that to be a problem. Just the occasional problem, but nothing serious. I'm pretty sure that the reason is that the correct, formal acquisition of grammatical presentation at an early age in school."

Sometimes, as in the above example, language problems were referred to, but they were dismissed as not being of the kind that would be taken into account very seriously:

> "As long as you're getting your point across, it can be done rather roughly, with some hiccups etc, that would lose some degree of high marks. But what you say is more important than how you say it. More mechanical skills like spelling and grammar, at this level I don't pay much attention. Only if they lose meaning through bad grammar."

> " Not looking for high literary style, but clarity of expression. As long as one can understand what is meant... obviously totally ungrammatical stuff is probably something the students don't understand themselves."

There is clearly a distinction here being made between grammar (and style) on the one hand, and meaning on the other, with meaning clearly prioritised in importance. A similar distinction can be seen in the following, which is a comment on those students who do have major difficulties with English:

> I: *Do you separate the thoughts and how they're expressed, in essays?*

> S: "In extreme cases of bad expression that becomes very important. As people get better, not marking for style (that'd be more important in a literature course, I'd think) so much as for what people are saying. "

Although these extracts show that teachers are capable of separating thinking and its expression, it was typical of the teachers to treat them as inseparable when they were explicitly discussing this issue. All the Kent teachers talked at some length about the close connection between meaning and the manner of presentation, and most took the view that it is not possible to separate presentation style, or manner of expression, from the content.

> "Can you divorce the organisation from the argument - no. If the paper is very disorganised then the writer hasn't understood the issue."

The standard view expressed was thus that expression equals content, and that what looks like poor or unusual argumentation reflects faulty or muddled thinking:

> "Foreigners on the whole make very short paragraphs, which indicates they haven't actually explored that particular point fully".

Obviously such attitudes are highly disadvantageous to overseas students. As already pointed out in Section 1 of this paper, research with both students at various levels of education and mature academics' writing clearly indicates that there are cultural differences in rhetorical preferences. If it is not taken seriously that students may have acquired certain non-English preferences for argumentation or presentation in their own community, the students' academic and cognitive abilities may not be done justice.

One difficulty the students felt strongly about was the time and effort that went into even a relatively modest essay. The exchange students believed they spent much more time on their essays than native students did, and felt they were under constant pressure in writing, struggling to get the expression right, and trying to meet the new demands on their writing. This is apparently something the teachers are not aware of, who only see the finished product. They therefore do not seem to realise that in order to produce a reasonably correctly written essay, the student may have spent a long time and struggled very hard. Thus, not seeing the effort that goes into an essay, the teachers are unable to appreciate it, while in face-to-face situations, such as seminars, the student's difficulty in participating is more obvious and is more readily taken into account.

It also came out that since it takes the foreigners so much time to produce acceptable written text, they tend to write shorter essays, which influences their marks. Moreover, although poor expression did not lead to failure, it was assumed, as a matter of course, to lose some high marks. Thus the foreign student may find it difficult to get to the very top, despite academic potential. Problems of this kind are of course more salient to overseas students in whole degree programs than to exchange students, whose degrees are not so much affected by their assessment abroad.

The tacit assumption among Kent staff, then, (which also fits in with the belief that there are no important cultural differences within university studies) is that foreignness is dealt with if non-native students are not penalised for errors in spelling and grammar, or, if we do not mind language as long as the meaning is clear. Even though this lenience towards foreign students' lexicogrammatical errors may be well intended, it is nevertheless misguided in that it ignores the problems that foreign students experience most acutely.

6 NOTIONS OF LANGUAGE

It seems, then, that the role of language in accounting for foreign students' difficulties in a new study environment is more complex and less well understood than might appear at first sight. Two mutually contradictory views of its role emerged from the interviews: on the one hand language was seen as no problem at all, on the other hand it was implicated as a major source of difficulty. These two conceptions did not divide the interviewees into two groups, with some holding one view and others the other, but most subjects expressed both notions at different points during their interview. The people thus appeared to have a dual representation of the situation.

In order to make sense out of this, the most obvious solution seems to be to look at the notion of language that is being expressed. Why is it that 'language' can both be a problem and not be one? The answer seems to lie in the two different notions of language that the subjects used:

(1) "received view", or "school view": language is essentially grammar and lexis, pronunciation, and sometimes "style". Several references to this notion of language were made during the interviews, particularly in contexts where it was said that such things do not matter although they tend to require correction in written text. They were also presented as issues which would not hold anybody back in discussions. This notion of language is the one that is usually taught in schools, and it is therefore usually the ordinary educated layperson's concept of language.

(2) "intuitive", or "discourse", or "pragmatic", view: how to use language appropriately in different situations. That is, how to participate in or produce discourses like essays or seminar discussions in an acceptable way. This includes questions like what is polite and desirable - are you supposed to show your agreement or disagreement with other participants? Who may you disagree with, should you express distance or deference to authorities and seminar leaders? Is it appropriate to talk about your own ideas, or about half-formulated thoughts? Is it polite and appropriate to leave pauses between turns in discussions, or to speak fast, interrupt, and continue immediately after previous speaker? How much do you need to know to be able to express an opinion, and how do you present arguments for your points? These issues relate to discourse in a broad sense: both to the kinds of things that are to be expressed in certain contexts, and the manner in which they are to be expressed. This view was more vaguely formulated in the interviews, and it may be more difficult to represent in a coherent manner for the participants, because

these things might not come under the ordinary, more narrow, but more familiar notiton of "language".

Thus, it seems that the speakers' self-contradicting statements about whether language is a problem to foreign students reflects this duality of the notion of language: when the received view of language is used, there is no problem, since these students' command of the code itself as it were is good. But when the intuitive or discourse view of language is used, problems are acknowledged, since it is at the level of social use of language that intercultural differences become manifest.

7 CONCLUSIONS

Our exploration of the study genres in a Finnish and a British university indicates that the study genre systems are indeed distinctly different despite the relatively similar labels which are used for the major genres. These differences were not, however, explicitly taken into account in orienting exchange students to their new environment. On the contrary, a strong belief in intercultural similarity seemed to prevail among all those who talked in their "home" environment. Thus, cultural differences were observed by those who had to cope in a new situation, that is, the exchange students, but were generally ignored by others. This was of course expected, but what was perhaps somewhat surprising was the extent to which it is possible to ignore cultural differences in everyday practices despite the rather obvious and commonsense notion that they must exist, and personal experience with overseas students (at Kent) or study abroad (many at Jyväskylä).

Nevertheless, although the exchange students made a number of observations concerning the differences in the discourses they encountered in the two universities, it is of interest to note that they never talked about the discourse types or genres in terms of different systems. That is, the synoptic overview of the genre systems that was presented in Section 3 was not available to students despite their participation in the system. The synoptic perspective resulted from all the information gathered by different methods, mainly the various interviews and the university documents and study guides. In other words, it is very much a researcher's perspective. Participants appear to observe ongoing discourses as they unfold, and focus on features which are relevant to their current needs and help them to cope. These needs do not seem to include much reflection upon the entire systems that are involved. If this is so, it helps understand why so many people with experience from study abroad are able to ignore systemic differences: if differences appear

as random oddities and practical problems which need to be dealt with as they are encountered, they are not integrated into a general picture of a whole with functional parts. In this respect the researcher's view is fundamentally different from a participant's view.

The interview method employed in this study turned out to be successful on the whole and fruitful in many ways. It was not without its problems, though. In particular, the first interview with the exchange students in Finland failed to give very interesting results. It consisted mainly of forced-choice questions and evaluation scales, which did not give the students much opportunity for reflecting upon their understanding of the discourses. All the other interviews were based on open questions, and were only semi-structured. The interviewees were thus free to choose their focus and approach, and take up issues that they felt were important. The fact that there was some structuring helped make the interviews comparable and secured some coverage of all the the issues that related to the research questions. Yet interviews are relatively public discourses, and in a university setting the interviewers are either colleagues or representatives of the institution to those interviewed, which of course attunes the responses which are considered appropriate, given these set roles. The answers are therefore presented within the university system on the system itself to another member of the system. Thus, they are representations of a rather specific kind. However, what is important from the present perspective is that they represent system-internal (or 'emic') views, which was relevant to the research questions posed.

Another advantage of the interview approach is that talking about discourses is talking about many other things as well. The interviews, which were basically discourse about discourse, provided interesting glimpses of the educational philosophies or ideologies that lie behind those discourses. This is not surprising in view of the role of discourses in creating social reality, in particular in a social context like a university, where most activities that count as 'doing' something involve discourse, particularly the written modes, reading and writing. In this study, most of the speaking concerning discourses was carried out on non-present discourses: people were talking about study genres as they conceived of them, or remembered them, and formulated their views in a way appropriate to an interview situation. The interesting next step in this research is to take a closer look at the discourses that were talked about, and to see whether and how far there is a match between what is said about discourses and what takes place in actual discourses, and furthermore, what is said about study genres in the actual unfolding of a discourse.

The discourse about discourses reported here suggested that ideological orientations in Finnish and the British universities differ in their basic orientation. The British system was described above as

"education-oriented", meaning that the purpose in teaching undergraduates appeared to be producing educated graduates, capable of utilising and evaluating research, and arguing their points appropriately and lucidly. The Finnish system, by comparison, seemed "research-oriented", in that scholarly standards and values, original research, and an analytical approach were foregrounded in undergraduate studies. Showing learning was also valued in Finland - being able to show that you know and have read a great deal was highly regarded.

These contrasting educational ideologies emerged mainly from the participants' descriptions, practically oriented documents and participant observation. They may not conform to those expressed in official statements of the universities or higher education authorities. The differences discerned by the current methods represent the systems at work on an everyday level, and therefore reflect something of the tacit knowledge that members of the university communities have and probably act upon, and they may have little to do with the systems as planned at higher levels of educational planning or decision-making. Interestingly, however, the present interpretation of the Finnish system as research-oriented is supported by views expressed by Finnish scholars investigating higher education, for instance Marttunen (1992: 289):

> One essential task of university teaching is to prepare students to become members of the scientific community. Thus teaching should deal with the activities characteristic of the scientific community. This means that it is important to help students to acquire the instruments of scientific thinking.

Similarly, Väliverronen (1992: 25) criticises the academic community for making access to the research community difficult for students, especially in "mass universities", where tacit knowledge of the research community, including appropriate discourses, are not explicitly taught to students. These views thus also take it for granted that the scholarly, scientific, research functions of the university are of prime importance and relevant to students from the start.

One consequence of such notions of higher education may be a certain discouragement of personal opinions from students, especially from the early stages of study. As noted above, this way of thinking tends to push personal views to a somewhat peripheral position, towards the very highest levels of academic thinking. If students have been socialised into such conceptions of personal views, a re-socialisation into the British system may require more than simply telling them that such things are now expected.

It was generally recognised among the interviewees that students have problems in a foreign study environment, and that many of these are related to the use of language in one way or another. However, because the conceptions of language that people held were diffuse and

often ambiguous, the role of foreign language skills appeared to be unclear to them. The received view of language as lexis and grammar was relatively clearcut, and it appeared to be easy to determine whether it was a source of problems or not. Mostly it was not experienced as a problem with Finnish students. The language-related areas which were problematic were to do with language as discourse rather than language as code. The discourse view of language seemed rather vague among the interviewees, especially as concerns the borderlines between language use and personality, nationality, and thinking. This uncertainty, together with underestimating cultural differences in the genre systems, may put the foreign student in a disadvantageous situation, where their difficulties are not adequately dealt with. The situation could be helped by expanding the notion of language to cover discourse, that is, the use of language which requires a communicative and social competence and sensitivity to the demands of variable situations. This would be the first step in helping both students and staff to see the discourse practices that they engage in and appreciate the cultural differences they embody, as well as the effort that necessarily goes into perceiving and acquiring new practices.

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Two discourse worlds: study genres in Britain and Finland

Anna Mauranen

This paper is a survey of the study genres that students encounter in the universities of Kent and Jyväskylä, and the communication problems that exchange students have. The genres, or discourse types, that are used in the two universities, differ much more from one another than might be inferred from looking at the names used for them; labels like 'seminar' or 'essay' get different interpretations in the two contexts. Such culture-specific concepts give rise to communicative difficulties. Finnish exchange students have a relatively good command of the code of English, that is, lexis and grammar or appropriate phraseology, but using this knowledge for participating appropriately in discourses presents problems, particularly as awareness of the discourse demands and their differences tends to be low among both students and staff.

Key words: academic discourse, cultural differences, genre, L2 problems

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FINNISH EXCHANGE STUDENTS' SELF-ASSESSED LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Ari Huhta

1 INTRODUCTION

The study aimed to find out the level of Finnish exchange students' proficiency in English, its adequacy for studies at a British university, and the most problematic situations of language use. For these purposes self-assessment data was collected from sixteen Jyväskylä University students who started their studies at Kent (15 students) and Manchester (one student) in autumn 1992. The study and its results are described first, followed by some general comments on the level of language proficiency required at British universities, and on the testing of Finnish students before they are selected to study abroad.

Self-assessment of language skills can yield valid and reliable information about language learners' proficiency, as has been demonstrated by several studies in recent years (see e.g. Oscarson 1989; Bachman and Palmer 1989). This was one of the reasons why self-assessment was chosen as the principal means of establishing the students' level of proficiency, rather than a formal language test. More important, however, was the fact that it seemed possible to construct a self-assessment instrument that could be related to international proficiency descriptions and the British universities' language proficiency

requirements. The students' scores on the screening test administered to them to check that they were competent enough were available, but it is very difficult to relate the test scores to the international proficiency descriptions referred to above. This would have required a complex and time-consuming analysis of the test. Thus, designing a self-assessment scale appeared to be not only an easier but also a more valid way of assessing the students, at least in the context of this study.

2 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The study is based on information gathered by two questionnaires given to the exchange students before and in the middle of their studies at Kent and Manchester. The first questionnaire was filled in by most students before they left for the foreign universities (see Appendix 1). It was given in the briefing organised by the University of Jyväskylä for them at the beginning of September 1992. The questions covered the students' language abilities in general, as well as a number of situations where they would probably have to use language during their studies abroad. The questionnaire was collected by the researcher immediately after the meeting. Not all exchange students could be given the questionnaire, because some had already left for Britain before the briefing.

The second questionnaire was sent to the students in February, that is, after five months from the beginning of their studies at the foreign universities (Appendix 2). The second questionnaire was very similar to the first, but the students were also asked to tell how well they had managed in terms of language proficiency and whether they had noticed any improvement in their skills. Most of those who returned the second questionnaire did it in February, but some were received as late as March or April. Thus, not all students responded to the questions at the same time, which means that they had varying amount of experience on which to rely in their answers. However, what is important from the point of view of this study is that all respondents had had enough time (at least four or five months) to live in the foreign environment to see what studying abroad really was like.

The students were also sent a kind of booklet and they were asked to keep a journal of their experiences about situations in which they had had linguistic difficulties. Only one of the students staying in Britain returned it at the end of the exchange period, so no results can be reported here.

2.1 The questionnaires

2.1.1 The self-assessment scales

Both questionnaires (Appendix 1 and 2) consisted of two parts. First, they had four assessment scales that the students were asked to use when rating their language proficiency. The second part contained a list of situations of language use and a number of questions related to these situations. In addition, both the scales and the situations were accompanied by a number of free-answer questions related to them, especially in the second questionnaire.

The self-assessment scales were used to get the students' general opinion on the level of their language proficiency. They also offer a possibility to compare the students' proficiency with the requirements set by international language tests and by the British universities.

The scales covered the traditional four aspects of language: reading, listening, writing and speaking. Each scale consisted of verbal descriptions of five levels of proficiency. The reason for using descriptions together with numbers rather than just purely numerical scales was to give meaning to the numbers and thus make self-assessment easier and more reliable (see Huhta 1993; North 1993). The scales were based on the descriptions of proficiency used in an international English language examination called the Certificates in Communicative Skills in English (CCSE), which is designed by the Royal Society of Arts and the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate. The CCSE measures the ability to comprehend and use general English, and it is targeted to foreigners who wish to come to Britain to study or work. The CCSE is less known than some other Cambridge examinations, such as the Certificate of Proficiency (CPE) and the First Certificate in English (FCE), but it was the first international test to adopt most of the ideas of the new movement in the late 70s called 'communicative language testing' (see Morrow 1979 and Carroll 1980). Nowadays the CCSE is taken by more than 10,000 candidates per year in many countries.

The scales used in this study were shortened versions of the original CCSE scales; they were also translated into Finnish - every attempt was however made to ensure that the shorter scales contained all the essential information of the original scales. In the process some of the expressions were simplified and some were discarded altogether because they would have been difficult to understand without familiarity with the CCSE examination. One proficiency level was added to the scale because the CCSE has only four levels and we wanted to have a level that would stand for a very high proficiency. The fifth level was designed by using such terminology and style that would correspond to the descriptions of

the four lower levels which were derived from the original CCSE scales. (A reader interested in rating scales and their construction can find more information on the subject in North 1992, Huhta 1993 and North 1993.)

The main reason for choosing the CCSE scales rather than those of some other tests was the fact that they are very clear and concrete in their descriptions of proficiency. This is of utmost importance in a scale that is used for self-assessment purposes - the students should understand the terms used in the descriptions. A version of the CCSE scales had been used at the Language Centre for Finnish Universities for selecting the most appropriate level of the CCSE examination for candidates who come to take the examination at the centre, and it had been noticed that they could fairly reliably select the most suitable level of the examination by reading the scales and rating themselves. Thus, the translated CCSE scales had proved useful for self-assessment before this study.

The CCSE scales also cover language proficiency more widely than many other scales: for example, the sociolinguistic aspect is included, i.e. the ability to use language appropriately according to the requirements of the specific communicative situation. In addition, the CCSE scales are anchored to the English Speaking Union's (ESU) framework. The ESU framework is a 9-level scale of language proficiency that was created to compare British English language examinations (see Appendix 3). The scale will quite likely have considerable influence on the common European scale that is being designed to help establish correspondences between different national examinations in Europe (see North 1992). According to the ESU framework, the CCSE examination has the following correspondence with the 9-level scale:

CCSE level 1 = level 4 on ESU scale
CCSE level 2 = level 5
CCSE level 3 = level 6
CCSE level 4 = level 7

We estimate that the fifth level on our scale corresponds with level 8 in the ESU framework. The fact that our scale can be linked, albeit roughly, to an international scale may be helpful in determining the level of language proficiency required from students who wish to study abroad. This point will be expanded in the last section of the article.

2.1.2 Specific situations

Besides the self-assessment scales for reading, listening, writing and speaking the questionnaires asked the students to estimate certain specific contexts of language use. This took the form of a grid presenting a number of situations of language use that the students might encounter during their exchange year in Britain. The students were asked to rate each situation in terms of its frequency and difficulty. In the first questionnaire they were asked to guess how often they would find

themselves in the situations described, and whether they would expect to experience any linguistic difficulties. In the second questionnaire they were then asked to report how frequent the situations had in fact turned out to be and if they had had any language problems. In addition, they were asked to mark with plusses or minuses the situations that had turned out to be more/less common or more/less difficult than expected. This was done in order to allow the students to indicate that their expectations had not matched the reality. Merely choosing numbers might not have conveyed us that information (see Appendix 2). Marking plusses and minuses arguably made the students' task more complicated and some of them only filled in the numbers and left the plusses and minuses out.

In many self-assessment questionnaires learners are asked to estimate how well they can manage in various linguistic tasks and situations. A recent study by Bachman and Palmer (1989) indicates that self-assessment may be more accurate if the learners are asked to judge how difficult they find the things they are asked about. The reason for this may be that learners are more aware of what they cannot do than what they can. Thus, we decided to ask about the difficulty of the situations listed in the grid, rather than ask the usual 'can do' questions.

In addition to the list of situations, the second questionnaire had a few open-ended questions concerning the students' expectations and surprises regarding the various situations. The idea was to confirm the information provided by the markings on the grid with free comments, and possibly get additional and more detailed information about the situations that the grid method might not provide.

3 RESULTS

Twelve students filled in the pre-course questionnaire and eleven the mid-term questionnaire; seven of them completed both. First, the students' self-estimated language proficiency on the 1 to 5 scales is described. Then, the information gathered by open-ended questions is presented question by question (see Appendix 1 and 2).

3.1 Self-assessments based on the 5-point scales

As can be seen in Table 1 below, the students were quite confident about their skills in understanding both written and spoken English before

starting their exchange year in Britain. However, quite a few of them were far less certain about their writing and speaking skills. A point of clarification is due here: the students could state that they belonged between two proficiency levels, if they could not make up their minds between the levels, thus the levels '2½' and '3½' in the table.

TABLE 1: Self-estimated levels of proficiency before studies abroad (n = 12)

Level:	1	2	2½	3	3½	4	5
Reading				7	1	4	
Listening				8		4	
Writing		4	1	6		1	
Speaking		2		9		1	

Table 2 presents the students' estimates after four or five months of studies; the estimates are broken down by the degree of adequacy of their language proficiency judged by their answers to the open-ended questions about the matter (see Appendix 2). The eleven students who filled in the second questionnaire were for the most part satisfied with their ability to comprehend and use English for study purposes, and their ratings appear to be consistently higher than before the studies. Two things are worth pointing out in these figures. First, there was one student who considered her reading, listening and speaking skills inadequate or somewhat inadequate, although she appeared to possess quite a high level of command in some of them (level 4 in reading, 3 in listening and 3 in speaking). Perhaps she was too demanding of herself, but that is difficult to know since we do not know how she did in her studies. Second, there were at least two students who felt they had perfectly adequate speaking skills for their studies even though they estimated their level of that skill to be relatively low (2 or 2½). The person who marked herself '2' on speaking had spent a year in America as an exchange student and got the top score in speaking in the pre-course screening test; quite probably she was grossly underestimating her language skills.

TABLE 2: Self-assessed level of language proficiency and the students' feeling of its adequacy for studies after five months of studies (n = 11)

Level: Adequacy:	1	2	2½	3	3½	4	4½	5
READING: Yes				1		8	1	
Not sure								
No						1		
LISTENING: Yes				3	1	5		
Not sure				1				
No				1				
WRITING: Yes				4		6		
Not sure					1			
No								
SPEAKING: Yes		1	1	4		1		
Not sure				1		1		
No				1	1			

Since the group who returned the first questionnaire (Table 1) did not overlap completely with those who filled in the second questionnaire (Table 2), it is worth having a closer look at those seven who filled in both questionnaires. For them a direct comparison of self-estimates is possible, and the findings are reported in Table 3. The students did not have their answers to the first questionnaire available, but, of course, some of them could have remembered how they had answered. Table 3 shows that the students indeed appeared to give themselves higher ratings after a few months of studies abroad. The statistical significance of the pre- and mid-exchange ratings was analysed by using the t-test. The only skill where the improvement had been statistically significant was writing (p=.015), but also reading and speaking almost achieved the most commonly used limit for significance, .050. Naturally, the small number of students makes the statistical significances tentative at best, but they can be seen as additional indications of the magnitude of differences.

The students' estimates based on the scales are very much in line with their responses to the open-ended questions about the progress they had made in learning English. These responses also indicated that the majority of students thought their language proficiency had clearly improved. The students stated that especially their writing skill had improved; this is also indicated by their numeric responses (i.e. their

responses on the 1-5 scales): the biggest increase in self-assessed proficiency had taken place in the writing skill, as Table 3 shows.

TABLE 3: Comparison of self-assessments done before the studies in Kent and after four months of studies

	AUTUMN -92	WINTER -93	T-VALUE	SIGNIFIC.	NUMBER
READING	3.6	4.0	-1.99	not sig. (.094)	7
LISTENING	3.4	3.6	-0.42	not sig. (.689)	7
WRITING	2.9	3.9	-3.36	.015	7
SPEAKING	3.0	3.4	-1.99	not sig. (.094)	7

Figures under 'Autumn -92' and 'Winter -93' refer to the self-assessment the students did on the 1 to 5 scale.

From a methodological point of view, it appears that both quantitative (marking an appropriate point on a scale) and qualitative responses (free answers to questions) gave roughly similar information about the progress the students had made in their proficiency, at least in this small-scale study. Some differences in the information produced by the two methods are apparent, however. The 1 to 5 point scale is too rough to reveal the progress most students felt they had made during the first months of the exchange programme. This is evident if one looks at Tables 3 and 4: there is hardly any progress in the listening skill according to information gathered by marking on the 1 to 5 scales in the two questionnaires (Table 3). However, when the students were directly asked whether they thought their listening skill had improved, almost all stated that it had.

3.2 Answers to the open-ended questions related to the 5-point scales

The following tables (Table 4 and 5) present the results of the remaining two questions that immediately followed each assessment scale (see Appendix 2). The students' responses on the question concerning the adequacy of their language skills were presented in Table 2.

TABLE 4: Answers to the question **"Do you feel that your skill has improved during the exchange term?"**

TABLE 4: Answers to the question **"Do you feel that your skill has improved during the exchange term?"**

	YES	NOT SURE	NO
READING	8	2	
LISTENING	9		2
WRITING	11		
SPEAKING	10		1

Table 4 indicates that almost all students stated that every aspect of their language proficiency had improved during the months they had studied in Britain. There was only one student who was pessimistic about her skills; she was the same student who considered her proficiency somewhat inadequate for study purposes, as reported above. Another student who had spent a year in the U.S. stated that her listening skill had not improved, rather she had regained the level of proficiency she had had in America a few years earlier.

TABLE 5: Answers to the question **"Have you noticed that you were a better / worse reader (or listener, etc. depending on the skill in question) than you thought before going to the foreign university?"**

	BETTER	AS I EXPECTED	WORSE	DON'T KNOW
READING	1	9		1
LISTENING	3	2	3	3
WRITING	6	5		
SPEAKING	2	7	2	

It seems on the basis of Table 5 that the students were able to predict their reading skill reasonably accurately: almost all stated that they were as good readers as they had thought they would be. Perhaps surprisingly, most students had also had quite an accurate idea of their speaking skills. Half of the students had underestimated their writing skills; a possible reason for that could be the fact that the amount of writing required of students at British universities was discussed a lot in the briefing before they left for Britain. This may have led them to worry about how they would cope with the amount of writing they would have to do. Very few students had been able to guess how well they would understand spoken English. Some students offered explanations to this: two found the British

way of speaking more difficult than the American variety they were more used to. Also, the academic discourse, or the language of the TV and movies were given as reasons for difficulties by some.

3.3 Information about specific situations of language use

In the following section the students' answers to the open-ended questions concerning the specific situations where they had to use English are summarized. Where relevant, the quantitative information from the grid of situations is added (see the end section of questionnaire 2 in Appendix 2).

> **Question 1. Are there situations which clearly have not matched your expectations? If there are, could you please explain which they have been and possibly give some reasons.**

> **A) Situations which have been a lot more common / rarer than I expected**

Many students did not answer this question, probably because they had known, at least roughly, how often they would encounter the various language use situations required in their studies. Three of the eleven mentioned, however, that essay writing had been more common than they had expected. A few other situations were also mentioned as being unexpectedly more common (by one student each): note-taking in seminars, reading books and articles, talking on the phone, and presentations in seminars. Only one student reported being surprised that some activities had taken place less frequently than he expected (examinations and presentations in seminars).

> **B) Situations which have been a lot easier / more difficult than I expected. Why? Could the reason be that your language proficiency has improved or that you over / underestimated your skills for these situations?**

The task that was most often mentioned (5, or about half of those who returned the second questionnaire) as being surprisingly difficult was taking part in seminar discussions. Some commented that this was not due to language problems but to the different nature of the seminars from what they had been used to in Finland: the argumentative nature of the British university seminar was given as a reason. One student described the atmosphere in the seminars as "tense".

Other difficult situations which were mentioned by one student each included: essay writing, writing and listening at the same time, and continuous concentration on listening to discussions in seminars.

Quantitative data collected from the students' answers to questions concerning individual situations (see Table 6) partly confirms the qualitative information presented above. Discussions in seminars was the situation type that was singled out as being unexpectedly difficult by a greater number of students (4) than any other situation. Unlike the qualitative information, students' quantitative answers indicate that essay writing was also considered surprisingly difficult by some students (4 students). Other situations were considered difficult by only one or two students each, or by none (see Table 6). These findings are very similar to those made by Lindeberg et al. (1992) in their study of the University of Helsinki students studying in Edinburgh.

One or two students mentioned that speaking in general had been easier than they had feared in advance.

> **Question 2. Were there any situations which where difficult at the beginning, but which do no longer cause you that much trouble? Which? Why are they easier now?**

As can be expected, the productive skills, i.e. speaking and writing, were those that many students had found somewhat difficult in the beginning but in which they had noticed clear improvement since then. As many as four of the eleven mentioned speaking as such a skill, while understanding lectures and/or note-taking were singled out by two, and essay writing by one student.

> **Question 3. Have you received any feedback on your language skills from your teachers or other students? What has the feedback been like?**

Most of the eleven students reported having received feedback on their English language skills. These included oral comments made by fellow students and written comments and corrections by teachers, especially in connection with essay writing. Quite a few said their language had been considered very good by fellow students and teachers. In at least two cases these include compliments on writing style by teachers. The students reported that the teachers had corrected only the grammar and expression mistakes in the essays.

> **Question 4. Has the feedback been useful? What kind of feedback has been / would be useful?**

The feedback had mostly been considered useful and encouraging, in the students' opinion. Some stated though that their language was not

usually corrected e.g. by fellow students perhaps because it was considered too impolite.

Question 5. Have you lived in an English-speaking country before? How long?

Five out of the eleven students had spent some time in an English-speaking country before their exchange year in Kent.

TABLE 6: Students' answers to the questions about various kinds of situations where they have to use English (on a 0 - 4 scale). High values indicate frequent or difficult situation.

The situations	n	Freq.	Difficulty	n of those with more difficulties than expected (= marked a 'minus')
Speaking and Listening				
Seminars / Tutorials and lectures:				
Understanding others	9	3.9	1.6	1
Speaking during discussions	11/10	3.0	2.3	4
Giving a presentation	11/8	1.2	1.1	
Oral examinations	6	0.0	-	
Social situations:				
Discussion with English-speaking students and others	11/9	3.9	1.0	1
Understanding others in these situations	9/11	4.0	1.1	2
Transactions in shops, banks, student adviser's office, etc.	11	3.5	0.9	
Understanding radio and TV programmes	10/9	3.2	1.3	2
Telephone conversations	11	2.5	1.3	
Reading and Writing				
Reading books and articles in one's own field	11	3.7	1.0	
Reading newspapers and magazines	11	3.2	0.9	2
Taking notes during lectures, seminars and tutorials	11	3.6	1.5	2
Writing answers in examinations	8/2	0.1	0.5	1
Writing essays	11	2.7	1.5	4
Filling in forms etc.	11	1.5	0.6	
Writing formal, official letters	10/6	0.6	0.7	1

3.4 Comparison of the self-estimates and the pre-course screening test results

An obvious way of validating the students' self-estimates would be to compare their ratings with the results of a language test. All the students had to take a screening test that consisted of reading comprehension, writing and oral skills sections. In practice there were several problems which made the comparisons almost worthless and which explain why the test and the self-assessment did not correlate with each other. First and foremost, the variance in the students self-estimates was in most cases so small that there could be no correlation between the test scores and the self-estimates. A look at Table 2 reveals that almost all assessed themselves at level four on reading, and the variation was almost as small in listening and writing. Only speaking was an exeption. There was not very much variance in the test scores either, so that the lack of any relation of the students' self-estimates and the language test scores is mostly due to this purely technical reason.

There are also other factors which may have contributed to the lack of signicant correlation even in those cases where there was some variance in the estimates (e.g. in the case of speaking). The screening test and the questionnaires were designed by different persons, probably using somewhat different approaches to testing/assessing language proficiency. At least one thing is certain: the test was not directly based on the CCSE proficiency scales as were the scales used in the questionnaires. Also, there were only a dozen students in the study which makes all statistical analyses very tentative at best.

Some of the scales may also have been less valid and more difficult to use than others. Describing reading and listening skills by using a scale system such as in this study is relatively uncommon in language testing and assessment. It may be that the scales used here were inaccurate or that language learners find it more difficult to assess their reading and listening skills in this way than they do in assessing speaking and writing.

4 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The exchange students reported that for most purposes they considered their English proficiency adequate. Most of the students also rated themselves quite high, at levels 6 or 7 in terms of the English Speaking Union's 9-point scale. However, certain contexts of language use caused

problems to some students; the most difficult task seemed to be speaking in seminar discussions. Some problems were also caused by understanding others in seminars and other teaching situations, writing essays and taking notes. These are obvious areas to be covered in pre-exchange training courses.

Three different information gathering methods were employed in the questionnaire, which means that the study also yielded some methodological information about self-assessment. The scales which consisted of numbers and their verbal explanations appeared to be clear and useful, but they can give only a relatively rough picture of the learners' proficiency. Also, some students apparently had a clearly too modest view of their proficiency resulting in unreliable assessment in their case. The main reason for having the scales was the possibility of linking the students' ratings to the ESU scale and the British universities' language proficiency requirements, which function they appear to fulfill. To get a more detailed picture of the students' language needs and possible problem areas, a list of different situations was presented to them. This helps us to compare our results with those done earlier in Finland (e.g. Lindeberg et al. 1992). The third method used were simple straightforward questions, where the students could give their free answers. These were used to complement both the scales and the list of situations, and they appeared to confirm much of the information given by the two other methods, but also provided other information that these could not give (e.g. clarifications, explanations, informative detail). Combining different methods appears to be necessary to increase the validity of questionnaire-based self-assessment studies, and it also seems to be the case that some free-answer questions are in place to clarify and check the most important information that the questionnaire attempts to get at.

Finally, I will discuss the language proficiency required by the British universities in the light of the tests they require from foreign students before accepting them. I will also consider the question of what kind of language testing should be used for pre-exchange screening purposes.

What is the level of English proficiency required from exchange students? A way to approach the problem is to look at what kind of language proficiency the British universities require from foreign students. Mostly, they require that foreign students get a grade in a British test that corresponds level 7 in the ESU framework. For example, the most common examination required by British universities, the Certificate of Proficiency, is estimated by the English Speaking Union to correspond level 7 on their scale. Most universities that accept the CCSE examination require level 4 in it, i.e. level 7 in ESU. The proficiency dealt with here refers to overall proficiency. The Certificate of Proficiency in English gives only one overall grade which is based both on oral and

written tests. CCSE and some other international tests report grades broken down by the skill, and some universities may require different grades in different skills depending on the requirements of the field to be studied.

There is some difference between the level of language proficiency reported as adequate by our exchange students after studying four months in Kent and the level that the universities appear to require from foreign students. Table 2 indicates that quite a few of the students who estimated themselves to be at level 3 (i.e. ESU 6) considered their proficiency adequate, especially for writing and speaking. There were two students who apparently had even lower proficiency in speaking and who still thought they had no problems. Several explanations are possible for the discrepancy. First, the estimates and comparisons done by the English Speaking Union are not totally reliable and accurate; on the contrary they are 'just' educated guesses and estimates based on experience but on very little empirical research. Admittedly, the ESU framework is considered useful and it is considered to represent the relative difficulty of different English language examinations in a roughly accurate manner. However, it may contain inaccuracies and overgeneralizations. Second, the students' self-estimates of their language proficiency may be inaccurate: those who rated themselves at level 3 or even lower may in reality be closer to level 4. The accuracy of the self-estimates is difficult to verify in a small study such as this one, since we lack firm anchor points (e.g. a test that would be based on the ESU or CCSE proficiency scales). The background information and the test scores appear to indicate that at least one of the students greatly underestimated her proficiency, so there is some indication of inaccuracy in the students' self-estimates. On the whole, however, the students' estimates appear to have some validity, since their self-ratings in questionnaires 1 and 2 are related in a meaningful way to their answers to open-ended questions in questionnaire 2, as reported above: those who felt that their skills had improved marked higher levels on the scale in questionnaire 2 than they had done before in questionnaire 1. Had the scale descriptions used in our study been unclear and ambiguous or the students' self-estimates totally inaccurate, this would not have been possible. The mere fact that the students could rely on descriptions of proficiency when rating themselves rather than having to select numbers on a purely numerical scale made their task probably easier and more accurate.

To sum up, the British universities generally require English proficiency that approximately corresponds to level 7 on the ESU scale. That level may not however be the minimum proficiency needed in the studies as some of the students' self-estimates appear to indicate. Perhaps, the requirement that foreing students should e.g. pass the Certificate of Proficiency is just made to guarantee that the students really have (more than) adequate proficiency.

The question of the real minimum language proficiency required for studies abroad is important from the point of view of the screening tests. The pre-exchange language test should ideally be based on a clearly defined notion of the minimum level of language proficiency that a prospective exchange student should have in order to manage in his or her studies in a foreing university. The test should attempt to measure whether the students have reached that level or not.

One way to design a valid language test for exchange students could start with the definition of the minimum proficiency needed for satisfactorily succeeding in the studies. A variety of sources could be used to establish the required proficiency level: an analysis of the tasks that the students have to do in the foreign university is an obvious possibility. Another is an analysis of the examinations required of foreign students by the universities (e.g. what kind of performance do the students who pass the CPE or IELTS tests at ESU level 7 demonstrate, and how that is different from level 6 performance - remember that the British universities required a grade equivalent of level 7 on ESU scale). Quite probably the minimum proficiency required for succeeding in studies varies between different subjects (e.g. English literature vs. physics). Also, the language skills needed in various fields differ, some requiring solid oral skills, others requiring mainly reading. Thus, defining one treshold level will not suffice but a set of treshold levels will quite probably be needed.

I would assume that, as far as English is concerned, the students who wish to study abroad normally possess an adequate general English language proficiency. Those who do not are exceptions. This does not mean that we should discontinue using language tests to check the students' English skills, but we might be able to get results that are valid and reliable enough by using relatively short tests, shorter than has been the case e.g. in Jyväskylä so far. This presupposes that the test focuses on the key aspects of the proficiency needed.

Perhaps a two-tier system of testing could be used for screening purposes. First, a relatively short test of both spoken and written skills could be administered to all prospective exchange students. Those who clearly demonstrate a high level of proficiency could be accepted immediately, as far as their (general) foreign language proficiency is concerned. For those who do not do well in the first test, a second, more extensive test would be administered in an attempt to find out whether they really are proficient enough.

It is apparent also that there are many students who, while having an adequate command of general English, find certain contexts of academic language use somewhat difficult and would benefit from training on them. The British seminars and essay tasks appear to be examples of such contexts.

Language proficiency should not, in my opinion, be the most important criterion in the selection of students for exchange programmes. Motivation and subject matter knowledge should always have priority, whereas the function of e.g. a language test should only be to check that the students have sufficient proficiency to function adequately in the foreign language, and thus prevent both the students from wasting their time and the university and society from wasting money on the exchange programme.

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APPENDIX 1: THE PRE-EXCHANGE QUESTIONNAIRE

ASSESSMENT OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Name: _____

Please, estimate your English language skills. Use the assessment scales below that describe the proficiency in reading, listening, writing and speaking. Circle the number that best fits your skills on all four scales. If you cannot choose between two levels, write between the descriptions of the levels e.g. "I am between these levels". You can specify your choices by writing your comments in the places provided for comments.

READING IN ENGLISH

1. I understand only some of the main points of texts, I read slowly and often need to consult a dictionary.

2. I understand some details of the text in addition to the main points. I sometimes need to use dictionary.

3. I understand most of the text. I read rather fluently and need to consult a dictionary only occasionally.

4. I understand most of the texts fully or almost fully. I may not understand some words; I rarely need to consult a dictionary. I read English texts almost as fluently as I read Finnish texts.

5. I fully understand the texts I read. I need to consult a dictionary only in cases of rare terms that belong to subjects I do not know. I read English texts as fluently as I read Finnish texts.

Comments: *(space for comments not shown here)*

LISTENING IN ENGLISH

1. I can understand only some main points. I find it difficult to follow somebody speaking at normal speech rate; I can really understand only if a person speaks slowly.

2. I can understand most of the main points, if the speaker does not use an unfamiliar accent. I find it rather difficult to follow somebody speaking at normal speech rate, this requires that I really concentrate on listening and it also requires a good reception (that is, there should not be too much background noise, etc).

3. I can understand most of what is said, unless a totally unfamiliar accent is used. I can follow speech delivered at normal tempo, if I concentrate on listening. Background noise can sometimes make comprehension difficult.

4. I can understand almost everything that is said, unless an unfamiliar accent is used. I can follow speech delivered at normal rate, and normal background noise does not usually disturb me.

5. I can understand everything that is said in English regardless of the speech rate, and normal background noise does not disturb me. Only a totally strange accent can cause difficulties.

Comments: *(+ space for comments)*

WRITING IN ENGLISH

1. I can write short, intelligible messages, etc. I find it difficult to write and I have to consult a dictionary very often. I usually write simple, short sentences. I make quite a lot of errors of different kinds (vocabulary, grammar, spelling) quite a lot, but I believe that the reader understands what I want to express.

2. I can write intelligible letters, messages, etc. I have to consult a dictionary rather often; writing is rather laborious. I usually know only one or two ways to express a particular matter. I make quite a few errors, but they do not impede comprehension. I can write a text that is reasonably coherent and in which different parts and points are connected with each other.

3. I usually write rather easily and fluently, although I have to consult a dictionary once in a while. I can sometimes express a particular matter in different ways depending on the situation and on the purpose of my text. I make some errors. I can express what I want to say rather well in different kinds of situations. My text forms a coherent whole, in which the parts of the text are connected with each other.

4. I write fluently and have to consult a dictionary only occasionally. I can express a particular matter in different ways and choose the right expression for the situation. I make few errors. My text forms a coherent whole, in which the parts of the text are very well connected with each other.

5. I write fluently and I don't need to consult a dictionary. I can express a particular matter in different ways and choose the right expression for the situation. I do not make errors, except such mistakes that I might make in my mother tongue. My text forms a coherent whole, in which the parts of the text are very well connected with each other.

Comments: *(+ space for comments)*

ORAL PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH

1. My pronunciation is usually intelligible, although it clearly deviates from the ways in which English is pronounced. I make errors of many different kinds (e.g. in vocabulary and grammar), but I can usually sort out the misunderstandings that they may cause during a conversation. I am not very fluent and I have to struggle to find the expressions I need. I can take part in a conversation, but not very actively; usually I answer briefly when I am asked something.

2. My pronunciation is usually intelligible, although it deviates from the ways in which English is pronounced. I make quite a few errors which do not, however, impede comprehension. I have to struggle somewhat to find the expressions I need. I can speak roughly in the manner that is appropriate in the particular situation where I am using the language; others can usually understand what I want to say. I can take the initiative in a discussion and I can occasionally speak a little longer if I have to.

3. My pronunciation is intelligible, although it deviates somewhat from the ways in which English is pronounced. I make some errors. I do not usually have to struggle to find the expressions I need. I can use different expressions for the same matter and I take an active part in discussions. I can speak in the manner that is appropriate in the particular situation and my intention; others can usually easily understand what I want to say. My turns can be rather long if necessary.

4. My pronunciation is accurate and intelligible, although it can be noticed that I am not a native speaker. I make few errors. I can say what I want to say without having to struggle. I use language that is appropriate to the situation and the purpose of my communication;

others do not have any difficulties in understanding what I want to say. I can maintain conversation and my turns can be long if necessary.

5. My pronunciation is accurate and intelligible, although it can be noticed that I am not a native speaker. I do not make errors, except such unintentional mistakes that I might make in my mother tongue. I can say what I want to say without having to struggle. I use language that is appropriate to the situation and the purpose of my communication; others do not have any difficulties in understanding what I want to say. I can maintain conversation and my turns can be long if necessary.

Comments: *(+ space for comments)*

SITUATIONS OF LANGUAGE USE

Please, estimate how often you think you will have to use English in the situations listed below during your study year in England. Do you think that you might have some difficulties in these situations due to your language proficiency? Please, mark your estimates in the boxes by writing the most appropriate number. Use the following assessment scales:

How often do you think you will use English in the situation?	Do you think you will have difficulties because of your language proficiency?
0 = never	0 = none / never
1 = a couple of times	1 = little / seldom
2 = monthly	2 = somewhat / occasionally
3 = weekly	3 = quite a lot / rather often
4 = daily	4 = very much / very often

SPEAKING AND LISTENING	How often?	Will have difficulties?
Seminars / Tutorials and lectures:		
Understanding others		
Speaking during discussions		
Giving a presentation		
Oral examinations		
Social situations: Discussion with English-speaking students and others		
Understanding others in these situations		
Transactions in shops, banks, student adviser's office, etc.		
Understanding radio and TV programmes		
Telephone conversations		
READING AND WRITING		
Reading books and articles in one's own field		
Reading newspapers and magazines		
Taking notes during lectures, seminars and tutorials		
Writing answers in examinations		
Writing essays		
Filling in forms etc.		
Writing formal, official letters		
Other situations (please, specify what)?		

Do you think the information briefing changed your views regarding your language proficiency and its adequacy?

APPENDIX 2: THE SECOND QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERED AFTER FIVE MONTHS OF STUDIES IN BRITAIN

PART 1: Self-assessment of the four skills

(First, the questionnaire contained the four self-assessment scales - reading, listening, writing, and speaking - which were exactly the same as in the first questionnaire. Instead of space for comments, each scale was followed by three questions listed below:)

Is your (reading / listening / writing / speaking) skill adequate for your studies?

Do you feel that your skill has improved during the exchange term?

Have you noticed that you were a better / worse reader (or listener, etc. depending on the skill in question) than you thought before going to the foreign university?

PART 2: Situations of language use

(In the second part the students were presented the same list of situations as four months before. They were again asked to rate how common vs. rare the situations had turned out to be, as well as how easy vs. difficult they considered them. In addition, they were asked to indicate if, in their opinion, their views had changed since the beginning of their studies:)

SITUATIONS OF LANGUAGE USE

Please, estimate how often you have used English in the situations listed below while studying in England. Have you had any difficulties in these situations on account of your language proficiency? Please, mark your estimates in the boxes by writing the most appropriate number. Use the following assessment scales:

How often have you used English in the situation?	Have you had any difficulties because of your language proficiency?
0 = never	0 = none / never
1 = a couple of times	1 = little / seldom
2 = monthly	2 = somewhat / occasionally
3 = weekly	3 = quite a lot / rather often
4 = daily	4 = very much / very often

In addition, please mark a plus (+) or minus (-) in such situations where you think you have changed your views from what they were before the studies. (It does not matter if you do not remember what you answered in the previous

questionnaire. What is important is your feeling of a possible change: have you changed your opinion about the frequency or difficulty of the situations?)

+ indicates that the situation is more common or easier than you had expected
- indicates that the situation is less common or more difficult than you had expected

For example, if it has turned out that you have to write essays every month (=2), not only a couple of times a term, as you had thought before the studies, mark '+' after number 2 in the table in the column provided.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING	How often?	+ -	Difficulties?	+ -
Seminars / Tutorials and lectures:				
Understanding others				
Speaking during discussions				
Giving a presentation				

(and so on; see table in Appendix 1)

(After the table the questionnaire contained a number of questions and space for answers:)

1. Are there situations which clearly have not matched your expectations? If there are, could you please explain which they have been and possibly give some reasons.

A) Situations which have been a lot more common / rarer than you expected

B) Situations which have been a lot easier / more difficult than you expected. Why? Could the reason be that your language proficiency has improved or that you over/underestimated your skills for these situations?

2. Were there any situations which where difficult at the beginning, but which do no longer cause you that much trouble? Which? Why are they easier now?
3. Have you received any feedback on your language skills from your teachers or other students? What has the feedback been like?

4. Has the feedback been useful? What kind of feedback has been / would be useful?

5. Have you lived in an English-speaking country before? How long?

APPENDIX 3: THE ENGLISH SPEAKING UNION FRAMEWORK

9 Has a full command of the language, with consistent accuracy, fluency, appropriate usage, organization and comprehension. An exceptional level of mastery, not always reached by native speakers, even quite educated ones.

8 Uses a full range of language with proficiency approaching that in the learner's own mother tongue. Copes well even with demanding and complex language situations. Makes occasional minor lapses in accuracy, fluency, appropriacy and organization which do not affect communication. Only rare uncertainties in conveying or comprehending the context of te message.

7 Uses the language fully effectively and confidently in most situations. A few lapses in accuracy, fluency, appropriacy and organization, but communication is effective and consistent, with only a few uncertainties in conveying or comprehending the content of the message.

6 Uses the language with confidence in all but the most demanding situations. Notieable lapses in accuracy, fluency, appropriacy and organization, but communication and comprehension are effective on most occasions, and are easily restored when difficulties arise.

5 Uses the language independently and effectively in all familiar situations. Rather frequent lapses in accuracy, fluency, appropriacy and organization, but usually succeeds in communicating and comprehending general message.

4 Uses a basic range of language, sufficient for familiar and non-pressuring situations. Many lapses in accuracy, fluency, appropriacy and organization, restricting continual communication and comprehension, so frequent efforts are needed to ensure communicative intention is achieved.

3 Uses a limited range of language, sufficient for simple practical needs. In more exacting situations, there are frequent problems in accuracy, fluency, appropriacy and organization, so that normal communication and comprehension frequently break down or are difficult to keep going.

2 Uses a narrow range of language, adequate for basic needs and simple situations. Does not really have sufficient language to cope with normal day-to-day, real-life communication, but basic communication is possible with adequate opportunities for assistance. Uses short, often inaccurate and inappropriately worded messages, with constant lapses in fluency.

1 Uses a few words or phrases such as common greetings, and recognizes some public notices or signs. At the lowest level recognizes which language is being used.

Finnish exchange students' self-assessed language proficiency

Ari Huhta

In the study, Finnish exchange students at Kent and Manchester estimated the level and adequacy of their proficiency in English, and reported on the most problematic situations of language use. A proficiency scale based on an international test was designed for the self-assessment. The results indicate that most students considered their language skills adequate for their studies, and that the skills had clearly improved during the first five months in Britain. Seminar discussions and essay writing were found out to be the most difficult study contexts. The study also provides methodological information on different questionnaire-based self-assessment tasks.

Key words: self-assessment, language proficiency, proficiency scales

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"In this essay I will concentrate ..." METADISCOURSE USED BY FINNISH STUDENTS

Raija Markkanen

1 INTRODUCTION

Interactionality is one of the basic features of all language use, both spoken and written. We use language for somebody else to hear or read and react to, not for ourselves. It is obvious that students' written products, their essays and seminar papers are mostly written with the teacher in mind. Students try to produce texts they think the teachers expect from them. Their idea of these expectations may be based on the teachers' instructions, the teachers' comments on earlier essays or simply their own assumptions of the teachers' wishes. Foreign students often have the extra problem of not knowing even the general conventions followed in writing in the new academic culture. They may simply have to rely on their earlier experiences in their own native culture.

An important part of the interactionality of texts and therefore of the conventions of writing are the implicit or explicit ways in which the writer leads the reader through the text, "talks to the reader" (Crismore 1989). This talking to the reader is here called *metadiscourse*, which can be defined as the linguistic material that does not add anything to the factual information given but serves the purposes of directing the reader in the interpretation of the content. There are linguistic items whose

function is to show how different parts of the text are related to each other or what the writer's attitude is to the information given. Metadiscourse is the cover term used here for these linguistic items (cf. Crismore 1989, Crismore & al 1993). Other names have also been used to cover either totally or partially the same area of language use: Lautamatti (1978) talks about "non-topical material", Enkvist (1978) of "metatext" and the "modalities of texts". In spoken language, at least partially similar phenomena have been given names like "gambits" (Keller 1979) and "metatalk" (Schiffrin 1980).

Metadiscourse can also be characterised by using Halliday's (1973) division of the basic functions of language into ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Metadiscourse can be seen as serving the latter two functions. To quote Halliday (1973:66), the textual function "is an enabling function, that of creating a text" and "it is this component that enables the speaker to organize what he is saying in such a way that it makes sense in the context and fulfils its function as a message". The interpersonal function, according to Halliday (1973:66) includes "all that may be understood by the expression of our own personalities and personal feelings on the one hand, and forms of interaction and social interplay with other participants in the communication situation on the other hand".

Since metadiscourse can be connected with two of the basic functions of language, it is obviously an important element in any kind of discourse. It is difficult to imagine a written text in which the writer does not use any devices to show readers how its different parts are related or does not give any clues as to how its contents should be evaluated. From the rhetorical point of view,then, metadiscourse in a text provides "the writer with a means of regulating the way in which readers will interpret it", to quote Mauranen's (1993) view of the role of connectives. A text that contains very little or virtually no metadiscourse would be extremely difficult to read. On the other hand, too much of it could be irritating to the reader. "Like any rhetorical device, metadiscourse can be used effectively or used ineffectively" (Crismore & al 1993: 68).

1.1 Difficulties in the use of metadiscourse

It can be assumed that the concept of metadiscourse is universal because it is difficult to imagine a language which would have no explicit ways to organize a text or evaluate its contents. However, there are differences between languages in the actual linguistic devices used for metadiscourse, to the extent that it may be difficult to see the functional equivalence of the items across languages. This can then make their appropriate use in a foreign language difficult. An additional difficulty may be caused by "the link of metadiscourse to its associated rhetorial context" (Mao

1993:163), ie. the different cultural conventions in the use of metadiscourse. Furthermore, this is an area of language use traditionally neglected in the teaching of writing, both in mother tongue and foreign language teaching. Its use has been discouraged rather than encouraged. Guide books often consider at least certain types of metadiscourse items "empty words", which should be avoided, without realizing that these "empty" expressions may have an important role in the total meaning of a text.

There are some references in the literature to difficulties that Finns have in the use of metadiscourse when writing in English. In their comparison of academic texts written by Finns in English with those produced by native speakers of English, Ventola and Mauranen (1990) found that the Finnish writers show less variation in the use of some metadiscourse types than the native speakers. For example, they use a more limited number of different connectors, ie. they have a few favourite ones (eg. also and however), which they use all the time. The modal expressions they use are also fewer in number. Compared with the Finnish writers, the native speakers thus have a more varied repertoire of expressions. In this light, it is interesting to see how the Finnish exchange students at Kent University manage in this area of language use.

1.2 Data

This report is based on the analysis of three kinds of data: (1) 12 essays written in English by the Finnish students at Kent University, ie. two essays by each of the six subjects chosen for the Communication in International Student Exchange project, (2) 9 essays written by the same students in Finnish at Jyväskylä University, and (3) 3 essays written by British students at Kent University. Unfortunately, it was impossible to obtain equal numbers of essays from all three groups of writers. However, the most important data, the essays written by the Finns in English adequately represent the work of these students at Kent. The focus of this report, then, is on these NNS (non-native speaker) essays. The NSE (native speakers of English) and the NSF (native speakers of Finnish writing in their mother tongue) essays have been analysed for the purposes of comparison: the NSE essays to find out to what extent the Finns behave like the native speakers when writing English, the NSF data to see if there is any transfer effect from their mother tongue.

An additional difficulty with the data is connected with the concept of genre. The essays written at Kent University by both the British and the Finnish students can be expected to represent the same genre, ie. academic essay as it is understood within the British culture. However, the texts produced by the Finnish students at their home

university are different in type: most of them are very formal seminar papers with an introductory chapter and conclusion, with subtitles and a table of contents. In addition, there are also some texts which students themselves described as "little essays", ie. informal essays written freely without any signs of academic conventions. They are expressions of opinion about a topic or free descriptions of films seen and books read. The type of essay required at British universities seems to be missing in the Finnish system (see Mauranen, this volume). The problem is that the genre of a text may also have an influence on the use of metadiscourse or as Mauranen (1993:163) puts it, "The ways in which a writer may wish to influence readers can also vary across genres." Thus, the present data does not provide an ideal basis for a proper cross-linguistic analysis. Still, even these imperfect data reveal some interesting features in the use of metadiscourse by the Finnish students writing in English.

2 ANALYSIS

There are no particular types of linguistic expressions that could be called metadiscourse items. On the contrary, linguistic devices of varying types can fulfill this function, items ranging from bound morphemes like the Finnish clitics to words, phrases and whole sentences. This means, then, that there are no linguistic criteria for the recognition of metadiscourse in texts. Purely functional criteria also lead into difficulties, particularly in the case of metadiscourse used in the interpersonal function as almost any lexical choice could be said to be an expression of the writer's attitude to the information given or to the potential reader. There are, of course, some items whose sole function is metadiscursive, such as the connectors and, but, however. But there are also those that could be interpreted as either belonging to the propositional content or to metadiscourse even in one and the same context like really in That was really nice. It could be interpreted as either modifying the following adjective, ie. being part of the propositional content, or modifying the whole proposition, in which case it would be metadiscursive.

The difficulties referred to above mean that a functional definition of metadiscourse is not enough and other criteria have to be used in the recognition of metadiscursive items in a text. We can for example argue that adjectives and adverbs that modify a part of the propositional content do not belong to metadiscourse even though they express the writer's attitude. They are part of the proposition itself. Furthermore, although coordinators like but are metadiscursive in function, subordinators like because are not. The reason is that, basically, subordinators perform a

syntactic function, ie. they change the syntactic relationship between clauses, whereas coordinators simply indicate logico-semantic relations without changing syntactic ones. In written texts, typographical devices and certain types of punctuation can also be considered as part of metadiscourse, eg. exclamation marks, dashes, parantheses, colons, and quotation marks are used to create a particular effect. But commas, full stops and question marks are not metadiscursive because their use is determined by syntactic factors. Guidelines like these have been followed in the present analysis. (see also Markkanen & al 1993; Crismore & al 1993)

2.1 Subcategorisation of metadiscourse

As mentioned above, metadiscourse can be seen as serving two of the three basic functions of language: the textual and the interpersonal. Accordingly, metadiscourse can be divided into two main types corresponding to these functions. This division is, however, too broad for a detailed analysis, and therefore attempts have been made to distinguish further subcategories within the two main types. The most carefully worked-out classification so far is the one by Vande Kopple (1985), based on earlier suggestions by Lautamatti (1978) and Williams (1981). The following is a slightly modified version of Vande Kopple's idea worked out and used by Crismore & al (1993).

A. Textual Metadiscourse

1. Textual markers, which help readers recognize how texts are organized and how different parts of a text are connected to each other functionally or semantically (eg. first, next, but, however).
2. Interpretive markers, which help readers interpret and understand the writer's meaning and writing strategies (eg. my next point is, X means Y, typographical markers and certain types of punctuation)
3. Narrators, which let readers know who said or wrote something (eg. according to X)

B. Interpersonal metadiscourse

1. Hedges, which are used to show the writer's lack of commitment to the truth-value of a proposition, ie. epistemic uncertainty (eg. might, perhaps)
2. Certainty markers, which express full commitment to the truth-value of a proposition, ie. epistemic certainty (eg. it is clear, I am absolutely sure)

3. Attributors, which support the writer's argument through reference to authority (eg. as X says)
4. Attitude markers, which express the writer's affective values, ie. attitudes toward the propositional content rather than commitment to it (eg. fortunately)
5. Commentaries, which draw the reader into an implicit dialogue with the writer (eg. you may not agree)

The above classification is not as clear-cut as it may seem: in many cases it is difficult to decide to which subcategory a particular expression belongs, particularly since some metadiscourse items are multifunctional. Their function can vary from one context to another or they even seem to perform two functions simultaneously in the same context. (See Markkanen & al 1993 on these difficulties). A particular problem with the above classification is caused by the distinction between narrators and attributors because both indicate the source of information. Whether this is done in order to convince the reader by referring to a well-known authority or more neutrally to inform the reader about the source of the information given is difficult to decide. In the study by Crismore & al (1993), in which the data consisted of persuasive texts, expressions like "James Gordon Frazer tells" or "as the Bible says" were considered attributors rather than narrators. In the type of data dealt with here, references to sources are narrators, ie. they indicate the source of information rather than try to persuade the reader. This seems to be a clear indication of the influence of genre on the use of metadiscourse. In the present study, then, the subclass of Attributors is not used at all.

3 RESULTS OF A "QUANTITATIVE" ANALYSIS

In order to see whether the three writer groups used metadiscourse to the same extent, the metadiscursive items in the essays were analysed and classified according to the above categorization and the number of occurrences of each metadiscourse type per T-unit were calculated for each writer group. Table 1. gives the total number of metadiscourse per T-unit of the two main metadiscourse types for the three writer groups (NNS=non-native speakers, ie. Finns writing in English, NSE=native speakers of English, NSF=Finns writing in Finnish).

TABLE 1:

Number of metadiscourse items per T-unit

	Total	Textual	Interpersonal
NNS	0.78	0.62	0.17
NSF	0.67	0.53	0.14
NSE	1.39	1.05	0.34

As Table 1. shows, the Finns use metadiscourse less than the native speakers of English, both when writing in English and in their mother tongue. The tendency is similar for both textual and interpersonal metadiscourse, although more noticeable for the former. This is in agreement with the findings of Mauranen (1993), according to whom Finnish writers use less what she calls "metatext" (correponds to textual metadiscourse in this report) than Anglo-American writers. However, all three groups show the same tendency of using the textual type more frequently than the interpersonal one, which is to be expected in academic writing. Interestingly, according to Crismore & al's (1993) study, both American and Finnish students used more interpersonal than textual metadiscourse in their persuasive texts. This is clearly a further indication of the influence of genre.

TABLE 2:

Number of items per T-unit in each subtype

	NNS	NSF	NSE
Textual markers	0.23	0.24	0.34
Interpret. markers	0.22	0.15	0.51
Narrators	0.17	0.15	0.20
Hedges	0.09	0.07	0.23
Certainty markers	0.01	0.01	0.02
Attitude markers	0.05	0.06	0.10
Commentaries	0.01	0.01	-

Table 2. shows that the most noticeable differences between the British and Finnish students are in the use of interpretive markers and hedges, both of which the British students use more than the Finns in either English or Finnish. Again here we find a difference with the results of Crismore & al's (1993) study, in which the Finnish writers were found to hedge much more than the American writers, who in turn used certainty markers more frequently. Once again it can be speculated that the difference in the behaviour of the Finnish writers in these two studies could have been caused by the genre of the texts. In their persuasive writing they might have felt more uncertainty and therefore a need for hedging than in these academic texts, in which they could - and often did - rely on factual information drawn from their reading.

The table also shows that the use of commentaries, ie. attempts to draw the reader into an implicit dialogue, is negligible in the type of writing the present data represents. This is to be expected, as it is difficult to imagine that a writer of an academic essay would appeal to "dear reader" or write things like "you may not agree but ...".

When looking at the above results, it must be kept in mind that the number of writers, particularly in the NSE group, is so small that a heavy use of some metadiscourse type by one writer only may cause the average for the whole group to be fairly high. This is the case with interpretive markers, which are used heavily (0.75 density) by one of the British students. All in all, the results of this "quantitative" analysis have to be taken with caution, only as an indication of possible differences. Therefore it is of more interest to take a look at the actual linguistic devices the writers use.

4 LINGUISTIC DEVICES USED FOR METADISCOURSE

As pointed out above, earlier studies in which the use of metadisourse by Finns in English is discussed suggest that Finns have a limited repertoire of items at their disposal when compared with native speakers of English, ie. they tend to prefer the same "favourite" expressions (see Ventola & Mauranen 1990 and Kärkkäinen 1992). Furthermore, Nikula (1992) found that Finns speaking English tend to use expressions for which there are clear translational equivalents in Finnish. It is interesting to see if these findings are corroborated by the results of the present study. In what follows, the actual linguistic devices used in the NNS data for each metadiscourse type will be compared with those used in the two other sets of data.

4.1 Textual Metadiscourse

Textual Markers. This subclass contains logical connectives like but, however, also, moreover and sequencers like firstly, secondly, finally. This is a straightforward subclass in the sense that Finnish has clear translational equivalents used in similar functions for most of the English items, eg. mutta "but", kuitenkin "however", ensiksi/ensinnäkin "firstly", myös "also", etc. There are exceptions to this rule, though, notably the Finnish clitics (-kin, -hAn), for which it is difficult to give exact

equivalents in English. This is due to their being multifunctional even in the sense that they can perform more than one function at a time. In some contexts at least -kin can be regarded as a logical connective, in which case it would correspond to also in English.

When looking at the textual markers that the three writer groups use most frequently, we get the following "top-four" lists of favourites:

NNS	NSE	NSF	
but	and	myös	"also"
and	also	mutta	"but"
also	but	kuitenkin	"however"
however	however	ja	"and"

As the lists show, all three groups have the same four favourites, although in a slightly different order.Moreover, all these favourites are used by all writers, except however, which is not used at all by one NNS writer. When we go below the top four in the lists, we find thus being used by all of the NSE writers and by four of the NNS writers. All but one of the Finns use so, which occurs in the text of only one native speaker. Though and yet are items that are not used at all by the Finns but are used by two of the three native speakers. These results do not seem to agree with the findings by Ventola and Mauranen (1990), ie. that Finns have a limited repertoire of English connectives at their disposal. If the repertoire of the Finnish writers of the present study is limited, so is that of the native speakers of English.

However, individual Finnish writers in this study were found to use some English textual markers incorrectly or at least in a way that did not seem natural or in which the native speakers never used them. Some of these individual usages could also be traced back to mother tongue influence, ie. to a corresponding/equivalent Finnish expression used in a similar way. Thus, in the following extract a Finnish student uses so in a function for which therefore or thus would seem more suitable:

> It is a certain kind of ideal life to which in any society only a minority of its members closely approximate. So if someone possesses individuality, it means that he or she is a person who has developed undesirably this capacity of critical judgement. So this kind of person can be regarded as a distinct human being set apart ...

There is also something odd in the use of so in the following:

> We have only experienced our own pain, so we cannot ...

The use of so in these examples could be a reflection of the Finnish niinpä, which would be natural in corresponding Finnish contexts. Only one of the native speakers uses so but does it differently. She uses it at the beginning of paragraphs, perhaps simply to signal its beginning:

> So again, the "artistic truth" is not to be found in the art itself ....
> So, artistic truth for Aristotle has a more social context ...

In the following extract the word still is used rather strangely by one of the Finnish writers:

> Relative freedom is, however, possible and policy may be directed towards minimizing the restraints on individuals and maximizing their opportunities. This cannot still make make people free in themselves ...

Still seems to be used here in the function of yet or however. Its use may be due to the writer's mixing up still and yet, which in their temporal sense have only one equivalent in Finnish (vielä). They are not easy for Finns to keep apart even in their temporal meanings. It is therefore understandable that they get confused in their textual functions. Another example of Finnish influence could be the erroneous use by one writer of on the other hand - on the other hand because the corresponding Finnish expression has the same item twice: toisaalta - toisaalta. We can thus find some uncertainty in the use of the English textual markers by the Finnish students. However, these are single occurrences in the texts of individual writers and not a general problem for the whole NNS group.

Interpretive Markers. The interpretive markers are a subgroup of metadiscourse that perhaps needs a longer explanation before starting to look at their use by the writers. This subgroup includes items that explain textual material, announce the writer's intentions or provide additional information or explanations in order to help the reader interpret the text. Thus, one important type, which occurs frequently in the present data, is announcements of the writer's intentions, like the following :

> We will now continue in this vein by speculating ...
> We may now return to the opening quote ....

Rhetorical questions can also function as announcements of writer intention, usually introducing a new topic, as in the following:

> Liberalism and freedom? The idea of absolute freedom is ....

Interpretive markers also include several typographical devices: quotes, parentheses, colons, dashes, etc. For example, quotation marks belong to this group when they indicate that the meaning of a word or phrase is not to be taken at face value or that the writer does not consider his/her choice of a word completely appropriate.

> eg.
> .... we can see a kind of "artistic truth"
> They wanted to concentrate on "bread and butter issues"
> the "real" reality
> a "Euro-man"

Parentheses, colons and dashes often indicate that what follows - or is within the parentheses - is an explanation or a specification of what precedes. In these cases they can be seen as part of metadiscourse.

> eg.
> .... either by conquest (Napoleon and Hitler) or by suggesting different models of co-operation between states (the idea of European parliament already during the Enlightenment)

That an explanation or specification is to follow can, of course, also be marked verbally with expressions like namely, that means, especially, actually. Interpretive markers also include the phrases for example/eg. and such as because it can be argued that they are used as announcements, comparable with a phrase like "to give an example" or the even clearer "I will give some examples". Underlining and the use of bold type can also be included in this subgroup when they are used for emphasis, ie. to show the reader the importance of some part of the text, as in the following:

> .... giving an idea of discontinuity

Finnish also offers comparable devices for interpretive marking, ie. the same types of typographical devices and expressions like nimittäin ("namely"), erityisesti ("especially"), itse asiassa ("actually"), esimerkiksi ("for example"), etc.

When we look at the extent to which these various devices for interpretive marking are used by the three writer groups, we get the following top-five lists:

NNS	NSE	NSF
announcements	quotation marks	esim. "eg."
parentheses	announcements	announcements
quotation marks	underlining	colons
for example/eg.	parentheses	quotation marks
colons	such as	parentheses

What seems significant in these lists is that so many of the most frequently used devices are typographical ones, except announcements and esimerkiksi/esim. ("for example/eg."), which occupies the first place in the list of NSF group. However, that some of the items are so high on the lists is explainable through the fact that one or two writers use them very frequently. Thus, for example underlining, which takes the third place in the NSE list, is used only by one writer. Out of the 45 occurrences of esim. found in the NSF essays, 29 are used by one writer.

Quotation marks are used only by two of the three NSE writers. Some of the writers thus seem to have their favourite devices.

There are some interesting phenomena in the use of announcements, particularly at the beginning and end of the essays. There is quite a lot of variation in the ways the Finnish students begin their English essays. First of all, there are two extreme cases: one of the students begins his essays by going straight into giving the factual information that the essays consist of, without any kind of introduction. That this does not meet the requirements for essays is seen in the comment the teacher has written on one of the essays:

> ".... but your essay is a little difficult to follow since you don't make clear to your reader what you are going to examine. You could usefully have written an introductory paragraph indicating that you ..."

The other extreme case is the writer who begins the essays with a formal introductory paragraph, starts it with the phrase "In my essay I propose to concentrate ...." and then gives a brief account of topics to be discussed. This may be a reflection of the Finnish seminar papers, in which, as pointed out above, a whole formal introductory chapter is normally required. Interestingly, the same student also ends both her essays in a similar way, with a paragraph that begins with "In conclusion ..." and then summarises the main points in the discussion.

Between the two extremes are most of the NNS writers, who either introduce the topic without any formal announcement of their intentions or first write something about the topic and then announce how they intend to deal with it. The following is an example of the latter type of beginning.

> In their writings, Hume and Schopenhauer have presented various thoughts concerning art criticism ..... In this paper I will bring up a few main lines of their theories ...

The last two alternatives are also found in the essays of the British students. One of them begins the essay with a quotation from Plato and then goes on as follows:

> The problem with any investigation into the nature of art is that it is such a hard concept to pin down. Art has had so many different definitions that ..... For the purposes of this essay, however, I shall use the three stages of art as laid out by Morris Weitz in his essay "Art, language and truth".

That the Finnish students feel some uncertainty as to a suitable way of beginning an essay comes out in the interviews carried out by Harjula and Manninen and reported in this volume. They quote one student who described the problem as follows:

> "you lacked expressions, in a way idioms, for how to begin .... in the beginning you in a way had to translate them directly from Finnish into English, the teacher certainly understood what you meant but surely noticed that you weren't a native speaker".

Narrators. As mentioned above, narrators give the source of a particular part of the information given in the text. In academic texts there are basically two ways of doing this: either the writer gives the reference after the bit of information or in a footnote or uses an introductory phrase like "according to X", "X argues/ claims/ adds etc.". Both types are used in the present data, by all three groups of writers. In giving the reference the Finns use the technique of mentioning the author, year of publication and page number in parentheses in the text. They do this both when writing in English and in their mother tongue. Each of the three British students uses a slightly different technique: one gives the references within the text, another gives them in footnotes on each page, the third one has a list of references at the end of the essay. This indicates that there is clearly a preferred technique at Finnish universities (or at least in Jyväskylä), whereas at Kent any technique is acceptable.

There is clearly so much similarity in this subgroup between the Finnish and the British devices that the Finnish students have no difficulty in using them appropriately. The densities per T-unit do not show any great differences either (NNS 0.17, NSE 0.20, NSF 0.14). The lowest density of the NSF group is explainable through the fact that part of the Finnish data consists of "little essays", which represent a type of text that does not require the use of narrators at all. That the density of the NNS group is somewhat lower than that of the NSE group is due to one student using only one narrator in his two English essays whereas he uses them quite frequently in his Finnish seminar paper.

4.2 Interpersonal Metadiscourse

According to the classification of metadiscourse followed in this study, its interpersonal type contains hedges, certainty markers, attitude markers, and commentaries, none of which are used extensively in the present data, commentaries least of all. Still, these metadiscourse subgroups deserve at least a brief discussion of their use by the three writer groups.

Hedges, which denote epistemic uncertainty, contain linguistic items like the modal auxiliaries may/might and can/could (when used epistemically), modal adverbs like possibly, probably, perhaps, maybe, different phrases with the verb seem (eg. it seems to be, it seems to me), etc. In Finnish, hedging is also realized by using modal verbs in their epistemic meaning (voida and saattaa), adverbs like luultavasti ("presumably") and todennäköisesti ("in all likelyhood"), ehkä ("perhaps"),

etc. In Finnish a fairly common hedge is also (minun) mielestäni ("in my opinion"). It can also be argued that frequency adverbials like yleensä ("generally") and generally function as hedges in contexts like the following:

> RP assosioidaan yleensä ylimpiin sosiaaliluokkiin.
> "RP is generally associated with the highest social classes."

In the data, both native speaker groups use the modal verbs most frequently as hedging devices. For the native speakers of English, the next in frequency is the verb seem and then come the modal adverbials like probably. In the Finnish texts frequency adverbs like yleensä come after the modal verbs, and in the third place is the expression mielestäni ("in my opinion").

When writing in English, the Finns have seem as their favourite hedge, then the modal verbs and the frequency adverbials usually and generally in the third place. Their use of frequency adverbials for hedging purposes could be a reflection from the mother tongue, since the NSE writers do not use them at all. Some of the NNS writers also use expressions like in my opinion, as far as I can see, I suppose, which are not used by the British students at all. Here again, there could be some transfer effect from the common Finnish hedge mielestäni. (cf. Nikula 1992 on the hedging behaviour of Finns speaking English)

Certainty Markers. The use of this subgroup is even more negligible in the data than that of hedges - it is actually almost nonexistent. The only expressions used to show certainty in the students' texts are adverbs like certainly in English and its Finnish equivalent varmasti. The infrequent use of this subcategory is no surprise in the present type of data, which rely to a great extent on factual information drawn from the sources indicated. This information is supposed to be the basis of the writers' own argumentation. The situation is very different for example in persuasive writing, which aims at convincing readers of the importance of the writer's own opinions and in which certainty markers are therefore used for emphasis.

Attitude Markers. Similar considerations apply also to the use of this subgroup in the data. It is natural that expressions of the writer's own attitudes toward the information given, like surprisingly, interestingly or valitettavasti ("unfortunately") and on selvää että ("it is clear that"), are not that common in academic writing. Again, the situation is different in persuasive writing, in which even emotional appeals to readers are natural.

Commentaries. This subgroup, which contains devices used by the writer for the purpose of drawing the reader into an implicit dialogue, is the

least used one of all metadiscourse types in the present data. None of the NSE writers use commentaries. Only three of the Finns use them when writing in English and four when writing in Finnish. The linguistic devices that in the present data can be said to function as ways to draw readers into an implicit dialogue are some rhetorical questions, like those in the following extract.

> We can ask if a human being is free when he or she is totally lonely for example in the empty island. Then we could decide about everything by ourselves without the influence of other people. Is it freedom to decide about everything when there is not even a possibility to talk with anybody? And should we have an opportunity to show other people that we are free? I shall not go further in this idea.

In this example, the questions are left for the reader to consider, not answered by the writer. It is interesting to note that the same writer uses questions in the same way in her Finnish seminar paper:

> Mielenkiintoinen satu on saatu tehtyä kuolettavan tylsäksi kuvaamalla minuuttikaupalla samaa liikkumatonta kirjan sivua. Jos tämä ei vie lapsia vauhdikkaiden animaatioiden pariin, niin mikä sitten?
>
> (An interesting fairy-tale is made deadly boring by showing the same page of the book for several minutes. If this does not drive children to watching animations, what does?)

The function of these questions could be seen in Quirk & al's (1972: 401) terms as performing the function of forceful statements. "More precisely, a positive rhetorical question is like a strong negative assertion, while a negative rhetorical question is like a strong positive one." This is, of course, the case with yes/no questions. A wh-question in its turn can be "equivalent to a statement in which the Q-element is replaced by a negative element".

Sometimes, however, the writer does not leave the question to the reader to think about but answers it :

> Well, is it not harmful to other people if somebody attempts suicide? I think it definitely is.

It was pointed out above, in connection with interpretive markers, that rhetorical questions also function as a kind of announcements, ie. as expressions of the writer's intent. This they do when they introduce a new topic. This type of question occurs in the essays of both the Finnish and British students:

> So, how to find the truly beautiful, the essential forms of nature, the Platonic ideas in the work of art? Schopenhauer argues that ...

Since there are only very few commentaries (all of them rhetorical questions) in the data and since they are all used by the same Finnish writers in both languages, their use can perhaps be considered part of the idiosyncratic style of these writers rather than as a characteristic feature of Finnish writing in general.

5 CONCLUSION

As was pointed out in the introductory chapter above, the data used in the present analysis of metadiscourse were not ideal for a proper cross-linguistic analysis for a couple of reasons. First of all, there was the problem of genre: the texts written by the students at Kent and at Jyväskylä did not represent the same genre. Although they all were texts required as part of academic studies, they were of different types. The texts written by the Finnish students at their home university were either formal seminar papers or what the students described as "little essays". Both were different from the type of essay required at Kent University.

Moreover, the data were not ideal for a quantitative analysis due to the uneven numbers of students in the groups. Because of the small number of writers, particularly in the NSE group, the frequent use of some metadiscourse type by one writer made the average frequency for the whole group unreasonably high. The opposite effect was naturally also possible: total lack of some metadiscourse type in one writer's essay could lower the average for the whole group.

However, keeping these reservations in mind, we can draw the general conclusion on the basis of the above discussion that the Finnish students in this study seem to have no great difficulties in the use of metadiscourse when writing in English, except that they should use a bit more of it to sound more "natural". According to the results of the "quantitative" analysis, the Finnish students used metadiscourse less than did the British students (0.78 vs. 1.39 density per T-unit). This difference was more noticeable in textual metadiscourse (0.62 vs. 1.05 density) than in the interpersonal type (0.17 vs. 0.34 density). That the use of metadiscourse is desirable in the essays required at Kent was seen in the comment - quoted above - by a teacher on an essay that contains virtually no metadiscourse. The Finnish students also seemed to have difficulty with the use of some metadiscourse types, such as finding suitable ways to begin or end their essays and the adequate use of some individual connectives. These difficulties made their texts occasionally clumsy. In the case of individual metadiscourse items some transfer effect from the mother tongue could also be detected in NNS texts.

Thus, the real problems that the Finnish exchange students encounter in essay writing are not to be found in the use of metadiscourse any more than they are found in the areas of grammar, lexis or spelling, which the British teachers consider adequate (cf. Mauranen in this volume). The occasional clumsiness in the use of metadiscursive expressions is perhaps disturbing in the same way that occasional grammatical mistakes or strange choices of lexical items are. However, total lack of metadiscourse or very infrequent use of it in a text could be as damaging to it as bad grammar that distorts the meaning and makes the text unreadable - or at least very difficult to read.

Where the Finnish students' real problems lie in essay writing is in argumentation, in expressing their own views and backing them up with material drawn from their readings. They tend to use reading material to show "the width and depth of reading" (Mauranen, this volume) in the way they have learnt to do in their Finnish seminar papers.

The occasional awkwardness and "Finnishness" in the students' use of metadiscourse, of course, contributes to the overall impression of the essays, as part of the manner of presentation, which cannot be completely separated from the content. Clumsy use of metadiscourse together with other types of poor expression may thus prevent the Finnish student from getting top marks for an essay.

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"In this essay I will concentrate ..." Metadiscourse used by Finnish students

Raija Markkanen

The paper looks at Finnish students' essays from the point of view of metadiscourse. The Finnish students' English essays are compared with those written by the same students in Finnish and those of a few British students. In the study, metadiscourse is defined as the linguistic material that does not add anything to the factual information but directs the reader in the interpretation of the content. A suitable amount of metadiscourse is a necessary part of any text, but how much of it is used seems to depend on the genre of the text. The analysis shows that Finnish students have no great problems in its use when writing in English but that their occasional clumsiness in its use contributes to the overall impression of an essay and may affect its evaluation.

Key words: metadiscourse, cross-langauge study, students' essays, exchange students

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DIE BEDEUTUNG VON TEXTSORTENWISSEN FÜR DIE INTERKULTURELLE KOMMUNIKATION

Kommunikative Unterschiede im Biologiestudium an den Partneruniversitäten Jyväskylä und Bonn

Sabine Ylönen

1 EINLEITUNG

Im zunehmend (wirtschaftlich) vereinigten Europa hat auch die Mobilität der Studenten wachsende Bedeutung erhalten. Verschiedene internationale Austauschprogramme, die auch europäische Grenzen überschreiten, wurden zu diesem Zweck in den letzten Jahren eingerichtet.[1] Die Universität Jyväskylä ist z. B. an den Programmen ERASMUS, NORDPLUS und International Student Exchange Programme (ISEP) beteiligt. Zusätzlich zu diesen haben finnische Universitäten zahlreiche bilaterale Verträge zu Partneruniversitäten im Ausland geknüpft. Drittens existiert eine Vielzahl von Austauschverträgen zwischen einzelnen finnischen und ausländischen Fakultäten und Instituten. Die Universität Jyväskylä hat inzwischen zu fünf ausländischen Universitäten bilaterale Austauschprogramme ge-

[1] Eine kurze Übersicht über europäische Unterrichtsprogramme gibt z.B. der Artikel von Peter Floor 1991.

knüpft: zu Bonn in Deutschland, Graz in Österreich, Kent in Großbritannien, Alberta in Kanada und Tartu in Estland.

Ziel solcher Austauschprogramme ist es, "menschliche Ressourcen" für internationale Kooperationen in Wirtschaft und Wissenschaft auszubilden, die über eine "transnationale Kommunikations- und Kooperationsfähigkeit" verfügen (Baumgratz-Gangl 1989: 175ff.). Diese Kooperationen haben nicht das Ziel, die Studieninhalte von Hochschulen verschiedener Länder zu vereinheitlichen. Die Beibehaltung unterschiedlicher Studieninhalte erfordert wiederum, daß die Studenten sich an der Heimatuniversität um die Anerkennung der im Ausland absolvierten Studien bemühen müssen. Aber nicht nur fachliche Inhalte, sondern auch damit verbundene kommunikative Anforderungen an das Studium im Ausland unterscheiden sich oft wesentlich von denen im Heimatland und können den Fortgang und Erfolg der Studien stark beeinträchtigen. Probleme beim Bestehen fremdsprachlicher Kommunikationssituationen können die Ursache für mangelnden Nutzen des Auslandsstudiums und, im schlimmsten Fall, für dessen Abbruch sein. Wissen um kulturgebundene Kommunikationskonventionen kann deshalb den Studienfortgang entscheidend fördern.

Sprachkenntnisse dürfen in diesem Zusammenhang nicht als bloßer "Zusatz" zur fachlichen Qualifikation angesehen werden, die Fremdsprachenausbildung sollte integraler Bestandteil des Fachstudiums werden (Baumgraz-Gangl 1989:179). Bisheriger studienbegleitender Sprachenunterricht erfüllt diese Forderung in der Regel nicht. Der Zusammenhang von fachlicher und kommunikativer Kompetenz wird von Fach- und Sprachlehrern oft noch nicht erkannt. Fachlehrer betrachten Sprache häufig als selbstverständliches Mittel der Kommunikation, das "automatisch" erworben wird und nicht speziell trainiert werden braucht, Sprachenlehrer erkennen oft nicht die Bedeutung der Fachbezogenheit von Kommunikation in einem weiteren, die Kommunikationskultur fachlicher oder wissenschaftlicher Gemeinschaften einbeziehenden Sinn. Eine gezielte sprachliche Vorbereitung von Austauschstudenten, die für nur ein Jahr an einer ausländischen Hochschule studieren, gibt es bisher nur selten.[2] Ein Problem für die Integration des Sprachenunterrichts in das Fachstudium liegt auch im mangelnden Informationsaustausch zwischen den Partnerhochschulen (s.a. Keim und Vater 1993: 92f.). Voraussetzung für einen effektiven studienbegleitenden und -vorbereitenden Sprachenunterricht ist deshalb die Analyse der kommunikativen Studienbedingungen an den Universitäten des Heimat- und Ziellandes.

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[2] Ein Projekt zur sprachlichen Vorbereitung finnischer Austauschstudenten auf einen einjährigen Aufenthalt an der Universität Edinburgh läuft seit zwei Jahren in Helsinki (s. a. den Beitrag von Lindeberg/Lönnfors/Nordlund in diesem Heft). An der Fachhochschule Bielefeld - Fachbereich Wirtschaft - werden innerhalb des 'Europäischen Studienprogramms in Betriebswirtschaft und Management' Deutschkurse für ausländische Austauschstudenten durchgeführt (Keim und Vater 1993).

Am Zentralen Spracheninstitut Jyväskylä wurde 1992 ein Projekt zur Untersuchung der "Kommunikativen Bedingungen im internationalen Studentenaustausch" ins Leben gerufen, dessen Ziel es ist, gerade solche Probleme studienbezogener Kommunikation zu analysieren, die auf kulturell unterschiedlichen Diskurskonventionen beruhen (s. die Einleitung zu diesem Band). Ziel der vorliegenden Studie, die Teil dieses Projekts ist, war eine Analyse der kommunikativen Bedingungen im Studentenaustausch der Universitäten Jyväskylä und Bonn. Es handelt sich um eine Fallstudie, in der kommunikative Unterschiede im Biologiestudium der Partneruniversitäten analysiert wurden. Die Ergebnisse des Projekts sollen schließlich einer besseren sprachlich-kommunikativen Vorbereitung der Studenten auf ihren Auslandsaufenthalt dienen.

2 UMRIß DER VORLIEGENDEN STUDIE

Die Studienbedingungen und sprachlich-kommunikativen Anforderungen sind für die einzelnen Studienfächer zum einen landesspezifisch und zum anderen von Hochschule zu Hochschule verschieden. Eine flächendeckende Klärung von Unterschieden sprachlich-kommunikativer Anforderungen an allen Partneruniversitäten im Heimat- und in den Zielländern sowie in einzelnen Fächern und Studiensituationen war im Rahmen unseres Projekts weder möglich noch angestrebt. In meiner Untersuchung handelt es sich um eine **Fallstudie**, in der verschiedene **Kommunikationssituationen des Biologiestudiums** an den Universitäten Jyväskylä und Bonn kartiert und hinsichtlich kommunikativer Anforderungen und Bewertungskriterien miteinander verglichen werden sollten. Aufgrund dieser Kartierung wurde anschließend je eine Studienveranstaltung, die von der Studienorganisation her vergleichbar war, zur weiteren Analyse ausgewählt: die 'Blockübungen' in Bonn und der 'kurssi' (im folgenden als 'Kurs' bezeichnet) in Jyväskylä. Innerhalb dieser Veranstaltungen wiederum wurde die **Textsorte 'studentisches Referat'** genauer analysiert und die kommunikativen Anforderungen an diese Textsorte sowie Kriterien der Leistungsberwertung im Heimat- und Zielland miteinander verglichen. Der Begriff Textsorte wurde dabei mit Spillner (1983:11) pragmatisch-kommunikativ (und nicht sprachenzentriert) aufgefaßt, wonach Texte zu einer Sorte zusammengefaßt werden können, wenn sie hinsichtlich Kommunikationspartnern, Kommunikationsgegenstand, Kommunikationszweck, Kommunikationsart und Kommunikationsort übereinstimmen. Die Bezeichnung des 'studentischen Referats' als Textsorte wird also auf eine empirisch vorfindliche Klassifizierung von Texten bezogen und referiert somit auf eine Alltagsklassifikation (s.a. Heinemann/

Viehweger 1991:144). Ziel der vorliegenden Studie war nicht, die Textsorten linguistisch zu beschreiben, sondern der Schwerpunkt lag auf einer Charakterisierung der Diskurskonventionen für einzelne Kommunikationssituationen und Textsorten des Studiums und dem Herausfinden der für sie kulturell unterschiedlichen Muster. Speziell wurden Faktoren wie Kommunikatsart (Mündlich- oder Schriftlichkeit) sowie Anforderungen an den Umfang und die einzusetzenden rhetorischen Mittel (z.B. Medieneinsatz) der einzelnen Kommunikationssituationen und Textsorten untersucht.

Als "Versuchskaninchen" für die vorliegende Studie stellte sich freundlicherweise eine finnische Biologiestudentin aus Jyväskylä, die das Studienjahr 1992/93 an der Universität Bonn verbrachte, zur Verfügung.[3]

Zur Kartierung der Kommunikationssituationen im Biologiestudium in Bonn und Jyväskylä sowie ihrem Vergleich hinsichtlich **kommunikativer Anforderungen und Bewertungskriterien** wurden zum einen die Studienführer der beiden Universitäten miteinander verglichen und zum anderen Interviews mit den Ausbildern in Jyväskylä und Bonn durchgeführt.[4] Als Grundlage für die Interviews diente ein von der Projektgruppe ausgearbeiteter Fragebogen. Außerdem wurde die finnische Biologiestudentin zu diesem Thema befragt.

Zum Vergleich der 'studentischen Referate' an den Universitäten Jyväskylä und Bonn besuchte ich jeweils einen Ökologie-Kurs des Heimat- und des Ziellandes: in Jyväskylä den Kurs "Viherrakentamisen kurssi" ("Begrünung und Landschaftsgestaltung") und in Bonn die Blockübungen zur "Ökologie des Wattenmeeres". In Jyväskylä wurden neun Referate (das der Probandin sowie acht weiterer finnischer Studenten) mit den anschließenden Diskussionen von mir beobachtet und protokollarisch festgehalten. Im Zielland wurden vier Vorträge mit den Diskussionen auf Video aufgezeichnet. Es handelte sich dabei um die Vorträge der finnischen Studentin sowie um die einer britischen und zweier deutscher Studentinnen. (Siehe das Quellenverzeichnis im Anhang). Die Beobachtungen dieser Einzelfälle wurden anschließend in Interviews mit den Ausbildern und Studentinnen besprochen um festzustellen, ob diese Kurse typisch für das Biologiestudium an der betreffenden Universität waren oder ob sich die kommunikativen Anforderungen bereits innerhalb einer Universität unterscheiden (z.B. in Abhängigkeit von den behandelten fachlichen Inhalten oder vom Unterrichtsstil der Kursleiter). Grundlage für die Interviews waren wiederum von der Projektgruppe erstellte Fragebögen.

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[3] An dieser Stelle möchte ich mich herzlich bei Johanna Rissanen für ihre Bereitschaft zur Zusammenarbeit bedanken.

[4] Für die Interviews danke ich Dr. Veikko Salonen und Dr. Veli Saari aus Jyväskylä sowie Prof. Dr. Kneitz aus Bonn.

3 ERGEBNISSE

3.1 Kommunikationssituationen des Biologiestudiums in Jyväskylä und Bonn

Die Kommunikationssituationen des Biologiestudiums gleichen sich in Jyväskylä und Bonn oberflächlich gesehen weitgehend (s. Abb. 1).

ABB. 1: Kommunikationssituationen des Biologiestudiums in Jyväskylä und Bonn

VORLESUNGEN:

wöchentlich (z. B. zwei Stunden pro Woche)
Studenten sind "Zuhörer"

Jyväskylä: überschaubare Veranstaltungen (bis 20 Teilnehmer) → Kontakt zum Ausbilder, schriftliche Abschlußprüfung
Bonn: "Mammutveranstaltungen" (bis 100 Teilnehmer) → Anonymität, keine Prüfung im Anschluß

SEMINARE:

wöchentlich (z. B. zwei Stunden pro Woche)
studentische Referate, Diskussionen

KURSE (in Finnland) bzw. **BLOCKÜBUNGEN** (in Deutschland)

Intensive Veranstaltungen (1 - 4 Wochen)
komplexer Aufbau:

- Vorlesungen,
- Demonstrationen,
- studentische Referate mit Diskussionen,
- Präparationen,
- Exkursionen oder Laborpraktika

Jyväskylä: Referat 10 - 15 Minuten, schriftliche Version des Referats abgeben, schriftliche Abschlußprüfung
Bonn: Referat 20 - 30 Minuten, Thesenpapier, selten Prüfung (mündlich oder schriftlich)

PRÜFUNGEN:

Jyväskylä: praktisch nach jeder Veranstaltung, schriftlich
Bonn: nach Studienabschnitten, meist mündlich

ABSCHLUßARBEIT:

Jyväskylä: "Progradutyö"
Bonn: Diplomarbeit bzw. Staatsexamensarbeit

An beiden Universitäten gibt es Vorlesungen, Seminare, Kurse bzw. Blockübungen mit Exkursionen und Laborpraktika sowie Prüfungen. Als Abschlußarbeit wird in Finnland eine "Progradutyö" und in Deutschland eine Diplomarbeit bzw. eine Staatsexamensarbeit (für Lehrerstudenten) verlangt. Vorlesungen und Seminare finden wöchentlich statt (z. B. zwei Stunden pro Woche). Seminare werden vorwiegend von den Studenten selbst bestritten: sie müssen Referate halten und diese gemeinsam in der Diskussion besprechen. Kurse (in Finnland) und Blockübungen (in Deutschland) sind intensive Veranstaltungen von einer bis zu vier Wochen Dauer und komplexem Aufbau. Sie bestehen aus Vorlesungen und Demonstrationen, studentischen Referaten mit Diskussionen, Präparationen und Exkursionen oder Laborpraktika. Der Unterschied zwischen eigenständigen Vorlesungen und solchen im Rahmen von Blockübungen besteht in Bonn vor allem in der Teilnehmerzahl und damit verbundenen Anonymität in für alle offenen Vorlesungen (bis 100 Teilnehmer) gegenüber größerem Kontakt zwischen Ausbilder und Studenten in den Blockübungen mit begrenzter Teilnehmerzahl (10 bis 15 Teilnehmer). In Jyväskylä ist dieser Kontakt eigentlich immer gegeben, da es keine solche Mammutveranstaltungen wie in Bonn gibt und die Gruppen in der Regel recht klein sind.

Schaut man sich nun die Kommunikationssituationen genauer an, so gibt es weitere Unterschiede zwischen den in ihnen vorkommenden einzelnen Textsorten oder Gesprächstypen in Jyväskylä und Bonn. Unterschiedlich sind dabei sowohl die kommunikativen Anforderungen als auch die Bewertungskriterien. Eine Übersicht über die während des Studiums in Jyväskylä und Bonn vorkommenden Textsorten bzw. Gesprächstypen geben die Tabellen 1 und 2.

Insgesamt gesehen fällt auf, daß in Finnland eindeutig die schriftlichen Fertigkeiten favorisiert werden während der Schwerpunkt in Deutschland auf den mündlichen Fertigkeiten liegt. **Schriftliche Prüfungen** (TAB. 1) kommen **in Bonn nur selten** vor. So werden z.B. nach dem biologischen Grundstudium nur zwei Klausuren zum Inhalt der Gundvorlesung und des Grundpraktikums durchgeführt. Dabei werden keine Anforderungen an die schriftliche Ausdrucksfähigkeit gestellt, da es sich um Abfragen von Fachwissen nach dem Multiple-Choice-Prinzip handelt. Schriftliche Abschlußprüfungen gibt es nur für Lehrer- aber nicht für Diplomstudenten. Auch innerhalb der komplexen 'Blockübungen' werden schriftliche Prüfungen nur von wenigen Kursleitern veranstaltet. **In Finnland spielen schriftliche Prüfungen dagegen eine große Rolle**, sie werden praktisch nach jeder Veranstaltung (nach jeder Vorlesung und jedem Kurs) durchgeführt. Die kommunikativen Anforderungen an die schriftlichen Prüfungen sind vielfältig, sie hängen ab vom Thema und den Prüfungsfragen. Neben essaytypischen Antworten können auch stichpunktartige oder das Anfertigen von Skizzen verlangt werden. Als wichtig für die positive Bewertung der schriftlichen Prüfungsleistungen

TAB. 1: Kommunikative Anforderungen und Bewertungskriterien von **schriflichen Kommunikationssituationen** im Biologiestudium im Heimatland (Jyväskylä/ Finnland) und Zielland (Bonn/Deutschland)

Textsorte	Häufigkeit und kommunikative Anforderungen in Jyväskylä/Finnland	Bewertungskriterien	Häufigkeit und kommunikative Anforderungen in Bonn/Deutschland	Bewertungskriterien
schr. Prüfung/ Klausur	*Vorkommen:* praktisch nach jeder Veranstaltung *Anforderungen:* abhängig von den Prüfungsfragen (essaytypische, stichpunkt- oder skizzenartige Antworten)	Argumentationsfertigkeit, bei der Sache bleiben, klare Gliederung, Kritikfähigkeit, Beherrschung der Fachterminologie, logische Darstellungsweise, zuweilen auch eigene Ansichten; werden benotet oder "bestanden/nicht bestanden"	*Vorkommen:* äußerst selten, 2 Klausuren zur biologischen Grundvorlesung (2 Semester, nach jedem eine Prüfung) schriftliche Abschlußprüfungen nur für das Staatsexamen (nicht für Diplomstudenten), Klausuren auch nach manchen "Blökken" *Anforderungen:* Fachwissen, "Man muß nicht schreiben können." (Zitat J. R.)	multiple choice (Inhalt der Grundvorlesung und des Grundpraktikums), bestanden/nicht bestanden
Thesenpapier für Referat	-	-	*Vorkommen:* zu jedem Referat *Anforderungen:* auf 2 bis 4 Seiten das Thema des Referats umfassend und ausreichend bearbeiten, Darstellung der wichtigsten Fakten (stichpunktartig, Skizzen)	wird nicht bewertet, dient als Ersatz für die Mitschrift und Grundlage für die Diskussion
schriftlich ausformuliertes Referat	*Vorkommen:* zu jedem Referat *Anforderungen:* Bekanntmachen mit Fachliteratur (Fachzeitschriften); Fähigkeit, das gesammelte Material zu bearbeiten und auszuwerten; logisch gegliederte Abhandlung (Ausbilder gibt Ratschläge, macht Verbesserungsvorschläge, trotzdem Unterschiede zwischen den Gruppen)	alle in den *Anforderungen* genannten Punkte sind wichtig, bestanden/ nicht bestanden (benotet wird die zum Kurs gehörige schriftliche Prüfung)	-	-
Protokolle	*Vorkommen:* Exkursionen und Laborpraktika *Anforderungen:* Arbeitsbeschreibung und Zusammenfassung, in Sätzen oder stichpunktartig	bestanden/ nicht bestanden im Rahmen der Kurse	*Vorkommen:* Exkursionen und Laborpraktika *Anforderungen:* Arbeitsbeschreibung und Zusammenfassung, in Sätzen oder stichpunktartig	bestanden/ nicht bestanden im Rahmen der Kurse
Progradu/ Diplomarbeit/ Staatsexamen	*Anforderungen:* fundiertes Fachwissen, umfangreiche empirische Arbeit, Gliederung wie Fachartikel	wird benotet (7 Stufen: "improbatur" = "nicht bestanden" bis "laudatur" = "mit Auszeichnung")	*Anforderungen:* fundiertes Fachwissen, umfangreiche empirische Arbeit, Gliederung wie Forschungsbericht	s. *Anforderungen*, wird benotet von 1 bis 4 (4 = nicht bestanden)

wurden gute Argumentationsfertigkeiten, bei der Sache bleiben, klare Gliederung und logische Darstellungsweise der Antworten, Beurteilungs- und Kritikfähigkeit sowie die Beherrschung der Fachterminologie genannt. Eigene Ansichten spielen nach Auskunft der Lektoren in der Biologie als naturwissenschaftlicher Disziplin nur selten eine Rolle. Zu diesen Ausnahmen zählte z.B. der Kurs "Begrünung und Landschaftsgestaltung", da hier persönliche "ästhetische" Urteilsfähigkeit zu städte- und landschaftsgestalterischen Aspekten gefragt war.

Die Textsorte **Protokoll** kommt sowohl in Jyväskylä als auch in Bonn vor. Protokolle werden in der Regel nicht benotet, gehören jedoch zum Absolvieren von Exkursionen und Laborpraktika. An beiden Universitäten wurden ähnliche Anforderungen an Protokolle genannt: das Abfassen einer Arbeitsbeschreibung und Zusammenfassung der Ergebnisse. Ein Protokoll kann entweder in Sätzen oder stichpunktartig abgefaßt werden. Da es hier weitgehende Übereinstimmungen der kommunikativen Anforderungen gibt und diese Textsorte auch keinen großen Einfluß auf die Leistungsbewertung der Studenten hat, wurde sie hier nicht ausführlicher untersucht.

Auch hinsichtlich der **akademischen Abschlußarbeit** herrschen ähnliche Konventionen an beiden Universitäten vor, auch wenn die Bezeichnung unterschiedlich ist: in Bonn 'Diplomarbeit' (für Diplomstudenten) oder 'Staatsexamen' (für Lehramtskandidaten) und in Jyväskylä 'Progradu' (einheitlich für Diplom- und Lehrerstudenten). Es handelt sich um eine umfangreiche empirische Forschungsarbeit, die benotet wird und in der fundiertes Fachwissen und die Fähigkeit zu eigenständigem wissenschaftlichen Arbeiten nachgewiesen werden müssen.

Der auffälligste Unterschied hinsichtlich der in Jyväskylä und Bonn vorkommenden schriftlichen Textsorten kann für die im Zusammenhang mit dem 'studentischen Referat' zu schreibenden Texte festgestellt werden. In Bonn muß ein **'Thesenpapier'** und in Jyväskylä die **'schriftliche Ausarbeitung des Referats'** angefertigt werden. Im **'Thesenpapier'** sollen nur die wichtigsten Fakten des Referats auf zwei bis vier Seiten zusammengefaßt werden. Es handelt sich also um eine Art 'Handout', das nicht bewertet wird und auf das es keinerlei Feedback gibt. Es soll den Studenten des Kurses ausführliche Mitschriften ersparen und als Grundlage für die im Anschluß an das Referat stattfindende fachliche Diskussion dienen. In Finnland muß dagegen eine 'schriftliche Ausarbeitung des Referats' abgegeben werden, die in der Art eines 'Forschungsberichts' abgefaßt werden soll. Diese 'schriftliche Ausarbeitung des Referats' ist besonders sorgfältig anzufertigen, da sie (und nicht der mündliche Vortrag) bewertet wird.

Hinsichtlich der **mündlichen Textsorten** bzw. Gesprächstypen unterscheiden sich die Anforderungen in Finnland und Deutschland wesentlich (s. TAB. 2). Insgesamt gesehen spielen mündliche Fertigkeiten in Bonn eine große, in Jyväskylä jedoch kaum eine Rolle. In Jyväskylä gibt

TAB. 2: Kommunikative Anforderungen und Bewertungskriterien von **mündlichen Kommunikationssituationen** im Biologiestudium im Heimatland (Jyväskylä/Finnland) und Zielland (Bonn/Deutschland)

Textsorte	Kommunikative Anforderungen in Jyväskylä/Finnland	Bewertungskriterien	Kommunikative Anforderungen in Bonn/Deutschland	Bewertungskriterien
mündliche Prüfung	-	-	*Häufigkeit:* Vordiplomprüfung (Diplom)/ Zwischenprüfung (Staatsexamen) nach 4 Sem. Diplomexamen (Hauptfach: 1 h, 1 Prüfer) und Staatsexamen (1 h, 2 Prüfer) jeweils mit Beisitzern *Anforderungen:* solides Grundwissen wird erfragt ("quer durch"), + 2 (oder 3) Schwerpunktgebiete nach Wunsch werden vertieft geprüft	solide Grundkenntnisse, Fähigkeit, sie darzustellen und ein Thema zu entwickeln (niemand kann alles wissen!), z.B. wenn etwas nicht ganz klar ist, die Fähigkeit zu überlegen und zu verknüpfen; es ist erwünscht, daß der Student eine eigene Position hat (im naturwiss. Bereich ist es so, daß man im Gegensatz zum geisteswiss. Bereich an Wahrheiten nicht viel ändern kann); werden benotet
Referat	*Häufigkeit:* **a) Seminar:** selten (Proseminar und Laudaturseminar) **b)** zu jedem **Kurs**, meist in Gruppenarbeit *Anforderungen:* **a) Seminar:** 30 Minuten freier Vortrag, schriftliche Ausarbeitung **b) Kurs:** 10 - 15 Minuten Vortrag, schriftliche Ausarbeitung (wird oft abgelesen)	**a) Seminar:** Fachnote (Biologie) nicht für mündliche sondern nur für schriftliche Leistung, Note für mündlichen Vortrag (Muttersprache) **b) Kurs:** bestanden/nicht bestanden (Hauptziel: Motivationsförderung) kein negatives Feedback, Positives wird hervorgehoben	*Häufigkeit:* regelmäßig in Seminaren und Blockübungen, allein oder in Zweiergruppen *Anforderungen:* 30 Minuten freier Vortrag, Thesenpapier	bestanden/ nicht bestanden, (für die Austauschstudenten werden auf Wunsch auch ausführliche Beurteilungen geschrieben und die Blockteilname benotet)
Diskussionen in Seminaren und Kursen/ Blockübungen	*Anforderungen:* auf Fachfragen antworten können; zeigen, daß man "bei der Sache ist"	-	*Anforderungen:* Stellungnahmen zu Fachfragen und Vortragsstil der Kommilitonen	-
Redebeiträge in Vorlesungen	zugelassen aber nicht notwendig	-	zugelassen aber nicht notwendig	-

es z.B. während des ganzen Biologiestudiums nicht eine einzige **'mündliche Prüfung'**. Als Ursache dafür wurde genannt, daß nur schriftliche Arbeiten eine objektive Bewertung der fachlichen Leistungen der Studenten erlauben und subjektive Einflüsse, wie sie in mündlichen Prüfungssituationen vorkommen, hier nicht störend wirken könnten. Daß alle subjektiven Einflüsse nach Möglichkeit ausgeschaltet werden sollen, macht folgendes Zitat aus dem Interview mit einem finnischen Lektor deutlich:

(1) "'Reagointia toisten esityksiin' ei käytetä arvostelukriteerinä, koska reagoivat hirveän vähän toisten asioihin (esityksiin). Se on luonnekysymys, vilkas opiskelija keventää opetustilannetta, mutta sitä ei arvioida, kaikkia eri luonteita arvostetaan. Arvosana tulee tenttivastauksesta. Ei mielikuvaa ihmisesta voi sulkea pois tietenkään, mutta toisaalta heitä ei opi tuntemaan lyhyellä luennolla. Jos joku antaa fiksun kuvan itsestään kurssilla, se vaikuttaa kyllä siihen, miten lukee tenttivastauksen."

Das 'Reagieren auf die Referate der anderen Studenten' ist kein Bewertungskriterium, weil die Studenten sehr wenig aufeinander reagieren. Das ist eine Charakterfrage, ein lebhafter Student lockert die Unterrichtssituation auf, aber das wird nicht zur Bewertung herangezogen, alle Charaktere sind geschätzt. Die Note wird für die schriftliche Prüfung erteilt. Das Bild vom Studenten kann man dabei natürlich nicht ganz ausschalten, andererseits lernt man die Studenten in einer kurzen Vorlesung aber auch nicht kennen. Aber wenn jemand einen schlauen Eindruck macht im Kurs, dann hat das natürlich einen Einfluß darauf, wie man die Prüfungsantworten liest. (Saari, Interview 5.6.1992)

Es wird hier also als Nachteil angesehen, daß das "Bild vom Studenten", das auch durch seine mündlichen kommunikativen Fertigkeiten geprägt wird, in die Bewertung der Leistungen der Studenten einfließt. Fachliche Leistungen werden in Jyväskylä an schriftlich formuliertem Wissen gemessen.

In Bonn dagegen dominieren die mündlichen Fertigkeiten. Sowohl die Vordiplomprüfung (für Diplomanden) bzw. die Zwischenprüfung (für das Staatsexamen) nach 4 Studiensemestern als auch das Diplom- und Staatsexamen sind mündliche Prüfungen. In diesen Prüfungen soll ein solides biologisches Grundwissen nachgewiesen werden, die Prüfungsfragen werden dazu zuerst "quer durch" (den Stoff) gestellt. Danach werden zwei oder drei Schwerpunktgebiete, die der Student selbst wählen kann, vertieft geprüft. Eine gute Bewertung erhalten die Studenten, die solide Grundkenntnisse nachweisen und die Fähigkeit zeigen, ein Thema zu entwickeln. Betont wurde dabei, daß niemand alles wissen könne, es aber darauf ankäme, durch Überlegen zu Lösungen zu gelangen und durch Synthese vorhandenen Einzelwissens logische Schlußfolgerungen ziehen zu können. Mit anderen Worten käme es nicht darauf an, Fakten auswendig zu lernen, sondern sie zu verstehen. Und ob ein Student seine Sache wirklich versteht, könne in einer mündlichen Prüfung eben besser

eingeschätzt werden, auch wenn das auf Kosten einer Objektivierung der Prüfungsergebnisse ginge:

> (2) *"'is natürlich sehr, ich find' das angenehm, na weil äh man kann besser regulieren und kann auch besser reagieren und die Studenten auch ... Vielleicht wird natürlich die Objektivierung etwas schwieriger, nä. Denn wenn man eine einheitliche schriftliche Aufgabe stellt, dann kann man's vergleichen und besser bewerten"* (Kneitz, Interview 29.4.93)

Außer den oben genannten können auch nach einigen Blockkursen mündliche Prüfungen vorkommen, wenn der Kursleiter dies beschließt. Im von mir besuchten Kurs zur "Ökologie des Wattenmeeres" wurde gar keine Prüfung veranstaltet, sondern die Leistung der Studenten aufgrund ihrer Kursbeteiligung und der von ihnen gehaltenen beiden Referate bewertet.

Entgegen der Bestrebungen in Jyväskylä, das "Bild vom Studenten" möglichst weitgehend auszuschalten und nur die schriftlichen Produkte für die Leistungsbewertung zugrunde zu legen, wurde in Bonn die Möglichkeit zum Kennenlernen der Studenten in einem vierwöchigen Blockkurs als positiv für die Leistungsbewertung eingeschätzt. Auch in Bonn wurde betont, daß alle Charaktere gleich geschätzt sind. Es komme nicht darauf an, ob ein Student redefreudiger oder zurückhaltender sei. Man würde die 12 bis 14 Studenten eines Blockkurses in jedem Fall gut kennenlernen, da alle Studenten durch die zwei zu haltenden Referate gezwungen seien, nach außen zu gehen und sich darzustellen. (Kneitz, Interview 29. 4. 1993) Das durch mündliche kommunikative Fertigkeiten geprägte "Bild vom Studenten" ist in Bonn also Grundlage für die Einschätzung der studentischen Leistungen.

Auf die Textsorte **'studentisches Referat'** eines "Blockkurses" (Bonn) bzw. "Kurses" (Jyväskylä) werde ich im Kapitel 3.2. ausführlicher eingehen. Hier sei nur darauf hingewiesen, daß **in Finnland** zwei Varianten des 'studentischen Referats' vorkommen: das in einem "Seminar" und das in einem "Kurs" zu haltende. Anforderungen und Bewertungskriterien unterscheiden sich in beiden wesentlich. Das **Referat eines Seminars** ist wesentlich umfangreicher als das eines Kurses (es soll ca. 30 Minuten dauern). Es kann von zwei Lektoren bewertet werden: vom Fachlektor auf den fachlichen Inhalt (Note im Fach Biologie) und vom Muttersprachenlektor auf die kommunikativen Fertigkeiten des mündlichen Vortrags hin (Note im Fach Muttersprache). Im Fach Biologie werden die beiden Fächer in der Regel im Rahmen des Proseminars kombiniert. Die fachlichen und kommunikativen Leistungen werden aber, wie gesagt, getrennt bewertet und beeinflussen einander nicht. Die fachliche Leistung wird vor allem am Inhalt und an der Gestaltung der 'schriftlichen Ausarbeitung des Referats' in Form eines Forschungsberichts gemessen. Das **Referat eines Kurses** hat dagegen einen bescheidenen Umfang (10 - 15 Minuten wird hier als Richtwert vorgegeben) und der mündliche Vortrag wird in

keiner Weise beurteilt. In Bonn werden dagegen sowohl kommunikative als auch fachliche Anforderungen an das Referat eines "Blockkurses" gestellt. Da es hinsichtlich der Textsorte 'studentisches Referat' eines Bonner "Blockkurses" und eines Jyväskyläer "Kurses" wesentliche Unterschiede gibt, obwohl sich beide Studiensituationen vom Aufbau her ähneln, sollen diese im nächsten Kapitel ausführlicher besprochen werden (s. 3.2.). Auch auf den Gesprächstyp **'Diskussion'**, der sowohl in Bonn als auch in Jyväskylä als ein Bestandteil zum 'studentischen Referat' gehört, soll im Abschnitt 3.2. genauer eingegangen werden.

Andere von den Studenten zu beherrschende mündliche Textsorten wurden nicht als wesentlich für das Biologiestudium genannt. Auf die Frage nach **'Redebeiträgen'** und **'Zwischenfragen'** in Vorlesungen wurde sowohl in Jyväskylä als auch in Bonn gesagt, daß diese zwar zugelassen, auf keinen Fall jedoch notwendige Anforderungen an das Fachstudium seien.

3.2 Vergleich der Textsorte 'studentisches Referat' eines Blockkurses (Bonn) mit einem Kurs (Jyväskylä)

Aus dem Vergleich der Kommunikationssituationen und der in ihnen vorkommenden schriftlichen und mündlichen Textsorten in Kapitel 3.1. wurde deutlich, daß trotz gleicher Bezeichnung weder die Kommunikationssituationen noch die Textsorten äquivalent sind. Ein Austauschstudent muß also davon ausgehen, daß es für eine Vorlesung, eine Prüfung oder einen Kurs im Zielland andere Konventionen als im Heimatland gibt und er oder sie u.U. neue kommunikative Bedigungen erfüllen muß. Es geht also nicht nur um die Lösung des sprachlichen Problems (wie erlerne ich möglichst schnell die deutsche Sprache, vor allem Lexik und Grammatik) sondern auch um eine Aneignung neuer Studientechniken und kommunikativer Fertigkeiten. Die finnische Studentin schrieb nach zweimonatigem Aufenthalt in Bonn:

(3) "Suurin ongelma täällä opiskelemisessa on, että kaikki täytyykin yhtäkkiä tehdä saksaksi ja saksalaisittain. Siksi tulevien opiskelijoiden voisi olla hyvä etukäteen tutustua saksalaiseen opiskelusysteemiin ja alakohtaiseen sanastoon."

"Das größte Problem im Studim hier ist, daß man alles in deutscher Sprache und auf deutsche Art tun muß. Deshalb wäre es gut, wenn kommende Studenten sich vorab über das deutsche Studiensystem informieren und mit der fachspezifischen Lexik vertraut machen würden."(J. Rissanen, Brief vom 14. 12. 92)

Ein finnischer "Kurs" ist von seinem komplexen Aufbau her mit den deutschen "Blockübungen" vergleichbar, von den Studenten müssen Vorlesungen, Demonstrationen, Referate, Präparationen, Exkursionen oder Laborpraktika absolviert und ähnliche Textsorten produziert werden. Ein wesentlicher Bestandteil von "Blockübungen" und "Kursen" ist die Textsorte 'studentisches Referat'. Da ein 'Block' und ein 'kurssi' in beiden Ländern als wesentliche, wenn nicht gar wichtigste Studienform bezeichnet werden kann, sich hinter der in Jyväskylä und Bonn gleichen Bezeichnung jedoch sehr unterschiedliche kommunikative Konventionen verbergen, wurde diese Textsorte hier genauer untersucht (TAB. 3).

Das Thema für das **'studenische Referat' eines finnischen Kurses** wird vom Kursleiter vorgegeben, entsprechende Fachliteratur wird empfohlen (in Finnland gibt es sehr gute Bibliotheken, in denen die Studenten Zugang zu umfangreicher Fachliteratur haben). Zur Länge des Referats wurde bereits festgestellt, daß es nicht sehr umfangreich sein muß. Die vorgegebenen 10 bis 15 Minuten wurden jedoch im von mir besuchten Kurs "Begrünung und Landschaftsgestaltung" in der Regel noch unterschritten, die Vorträge waren im Durchschnitt nur fünf bis zehn Minuten lang und wurden meist abgelesen. Nur ein Vortrag wich von den anderen ab, er war etwas länger (dauerte ca. 20 Minuten) wurde frei und im Austausch mit dem Publikum sowie unter Einsatz verschiedener Medien (Tafel, Anschauungsmaterial) vorgetragen. In den anderen Referaten fehlten sowohl Publikumskontakt als auch der Einsatz verschiedener Medien. Erklärlich ist das vor allem daraus, daß solche Faktoren in Jyväskylä nicht zu den Anforderungen gehören. Gefordert wird hier dagegen die Abgabe der schriftlichen Version des Referats (ähnlich wie im Jyväskyläer Seminar) sowie das Bestehen einer schriftlichen Abschlußprüfung. Ein weiterer Grund dafür war die kurze Dauer des Kurses von nur einer Woche. Die Referate fanden alle an einem Tag hintereinander weg statt, es war Freitag, also der letzte Tag der Woche, und die Studenten konnten anschließend nach Hause fahren. Sie hatten also ein Interesse, so schnell wie möglich fertig zu werden. Aber auch in anderen Kursen, die mehrere Wochen dauern, sind nach Auskunft der Ausbilder und der finnischen Studentin die mündlichen Referate nicht wesentlich länger, hier sind dagegen die schriftlichen Arbeiten ausführlicher und sorgfältiger anzufertigen (s. Tab.3: "kommunikative Ziele").

Fachliche Ziele eines Kurses sind das Bekanntmachen mit Fachliteratur (besonders auch mit Fachzeitschriften) und der Nachweis der Fähigkeit, das gesammelte Material bearbeiten und auswerten zu können. **Kommunikative Ziele** sind das Schreiben einer logisch gegliederten Abhandlung, die den Aufbau eines Forschungsberichts hat. Diese schriftlichen Kursarbeiten werden meist in Gruppen angefertigt, in die diverse Vorschläge des Ausbilders einfließen, die aber letztendlich doch die Handschrift der Gruppe tragen. Die mündliche Präsentation kann gemeinsam von den Gruppenmitgliedern erfolgen. Im von mir besuchten Kurs

TAB. 3:

'STUDENTISCHES REFERAT'
(in einem Kurs bzw. in Blockübungen)

	JYVÄSKYLÄ	BONN
UMFANG	10 - 15 Minuten	20 - 30 Minuten
INHALT	Thema wird vorgegeben, Literatur empfohlen	Thema wird vorgegeben, Literatur zur Verfügung gestellt
ANFORDERUNGEN	schriftliche Version des Referats, Vortrag	Thesenpapier und freier Vortrag
ZIELE: **1. fachliche**	* Bekanntmachen mit Fachliteratur (Fachzeitschriften) * Fähigkeit, das gesammelte Material zu bearbeiten und auszuwerten	* wissenschaftlich exakte Darlegung der Ergebnisse * Stellungnahme zu Fachfragen
2. kommunikative	* logisch gegliederte schriftliche Abhandlung (Ausbilder gibt Ratschläge, macht Verbesserungsvorschläge, trotzdem Unterschiede zwischen den Gruppen), * Studenten sollen lernen einen Forschungsbericht zu schreiben Keine Anforderungen an die mündliche Präsentation, wird oft abgelesen. Nicht erforderlich: Medieneinsatz, eigene Meinungen zu anderen Vorträgen	* klare Gliederung (mündlicher Vortrag) * Verständlichkeit * Studenten sollen lernen, mit den Medien umzugehen (Tafel, Overheadprojektor, Dias, Demonstrationen) * freies Sprechen ist wichtig sowohl für Lehramtskandidaten als auch für Diplomstudenten, die später in Ämtern, im wissenschaftlichen Bereich oder in der Erwachsenenbildung landen: "da muß man Inhalte sprachlich vernünftig darstellen können." * stärkere Diskussionsbeteiligung der Studenten erwünscht
EVALUATION	stark sachorientiert und theorielastig: schriftliche Prüfung und schriftliches Referat	stark kommunikationsorientiert: Präsentationstechnik und mündliche Abschlußgespräche

"Begrünung und Landschaftsgestaltung" wurden sie aber (mit einer Ausnahme) von nur einem Mitglied der Gruppe vorgetragen oder besser: abgelesen. Die schriftlich ausformulierten Referate, die den Kursteilnehmern als Handout verteilt wurden, waren sehr kurz, in der Regel fanden sie auf einer A4-Seite Platz. Sie hatten auch nicht die Form eines Forschungsberichts sondern eher die einer Zusammenfassung. Zum Beispiel fehlten hier auch jegliche Literaturangaben. In den Interviews mit den Ausbildern und der finnischen Studentin wurde jedoch hervorgehoben, daß die Ursache dafür in der nur einwöchigen Dauer des Kurses "Begrünung und Landschaftsgestaltung" zu suchen sei. In umfangreicheren, bis zu 4 Wochen dauernden Kursen stehe wesentlich mehr Zeit für die Anfertigung der schriftlichen Arbeiten zur Verfügung und diesen würde dann auch wesentlich mehr Gewicht beigemessen. Ausführlichere mündliche Referate kämen in Jyväskylä eigentich nur zweimal im Pro- und Laudaturseminar vor, und hierzu müssen dann auch ausführlichere schriftliche Arbeiten in der Art eines Forschungsberichts angefertigt werden. Die mündlichen Referate eines Kurses seien in jedem Falle so kurz und anspruchslos, daß man nicht viel dafür tun müsse. In umfangreicheren Kursen liegt das Gewicht also noch stärker auf der Entwicklung schriftlicher (und nicht mündlicher) Fertigkeiten.

Die anschließende **'Diskussion'** zu den 'studentischen Referaten' in Jyväskylä konzentrierte sich auf Fachfragen und nicht etwa auf den Vortragsstil. Sie wurde vom Kursleiter initiiert und gelenkt. Nach seiner Auskunft sollen die Studenten in der Diskussion beweisen, daß sie auf Fachfragen antworten (nicht: Fachfragen stellen) können und daß sie "bei der Sache" sind. Auf die Art und Weise des mündlichen Vortrags wird in der Diskussion in keiner Weise eingegangen. Mündliche kommunikative Fertigkeiten werden nicht als zur Fachleistung gehörig angesehen. Mit dem Halten mündlicher Referate sei lediglich eine motivierende Wirkung auf die Beschäftigung mit den Fachinhalten beabsichtigt.

Auch **in Bonn** wird das Thema für das **'studentische Referat'** vom Leiter der Blockübungen vorgegeben. Einzige Anweisungen für das Halten des Referats war, daß das Wichtigste zum Thema in der vorgegebenen Zeit gesagt werden soll. Was das Wichtigste sei, erfahre man aus der vorgeschlagenen Literatur. Die Fachliteratur wurde im von mir besuchten Blockkurs zur "Ökologie des Wattenmeeres" zur Verfügung gestellt. Die Studentinnen wiesen in den Interviews darauf hin, daß es sehr schwer sei, an der Bonner Universitätsbibliothek an Fachliteratur heranzukommen: es gäbe entschieden zu wenig Literatur und zu viele Benutzer. Die Bücher wären nicht sofort zugänglich, sondern müßten 24 Stunden vorher bestellt werden. Nach dieser Zeit erfahre man dann meist, daß die Literatur gerade ausgeliehen sei. Die Wartezeiten wären unzumutbar und man wäre deshalb gezwungen, die wichtigsten Bücher zu kaufen. Die Zeitschriften seien nicht alphabetisch geordnet sondern hätten Nummern, die erst von den Bibliothekaren erfragt werden müssen. Ein

Regal mit den neuesten Zeitschriften gäbe es nicht, die lägen vermutlich auf den Tischen der Professoren. Aus diesem Kontext heraus ist das Zur-Verfügung-Stellen von Fachliteratur durch die Kursleiter eine willkommene Studienerleichterung. Als Länge für die Referate waren 20 bis 30 Minuten vorgegeben, diese Zeit wurde in drei der vier von mir beobachteten Fälle noch überschritten. Die Vorträge wurden unter Einsatz verschiedenster Medien (Tafel, Overheadprojektor, Dias, Anschauungsmaterial) frei vorgetragen, nur die beiden ausländischen Studentinnen (die Finnin und die Engländerin) hafteten streckenweise stärker an dem ausformulierten Text ihres Referats. Die beiden deutschen Studentinnen hatten ihr Referat nicht ausformuliert, ihrem Vortrag lagen stichpunktartige Notizen zugrunde.

Fachliche Ziele des 'studentischen Referats' sind in Bonn, die Ergebnisse der eigenen Untersuchung wissenschaftlich exakt darlegen und zu Fachfragen Stellung nehmen zu können. **Kommunikative Ziele** liegen darin, einen mündlichen Vortrag zu üben, wie er u.a. auf wissenschaftlichen Tagungen und Konferenzen üblich ist. Aus diesem Grund solle auch ein 'Thesenpapier' angefertigt werden, das den Kursteilnehmern als Handout verteilt wird; es ist gleichzeitig die einzige schriftlich abzuliefernde Arbeit eines Blockkurses. Der mündliche Vortrag soll klar gegliedert und verständlich sein. Die Studenten sollen lernen, mit den verschiedensten Medien umzugehen (Tafel, Overheadprojektor, Dias, Demonstrationen). Selbstredend sei es sowohl für Lehramtskandidaten als auch für Diplomstudenten, die später in Ämtern (für Naturschutz, Umwelt,...), im wissenschaftlichen Bereich oder in der Erwachsenenbildung arbeiten, wichtig, "Inhalte sprachlich vernünftig darstellen zu können" (Kneitz, Interview 29. 4. 1993). Schriftliche Fertigkeiten spielen hier keine Rolle (s. auch die Angaben zum Thesenpapier, S. 8), die finnische Austauschstudentin faßte das kurz so zusammen:

(4) "Kirjoittaa ei tartte osata." *Schreiben muß man nicht können.* (J. Rissanen, Interview 28. 4. 1993)

Die **'Diskussionen'** zu den 'studentischen Referaten' wurden auch hier vom Kursleiter initiiert und gelenkt. Sie waren zweigeteilt: zuerst wurde der Stil jedes Vortrags kritisch ausgewertet, danach wurden Fachfragen diskutiert. Das Verhältnis des Diskussionsumfangs "Form" zu "Sache" war im Durchschnitt 1 zu 3. Zu "Formfragen" zählte z.B., welche Medien eingesetzt wurden (es sollten möglichst viele Medien eingesetzt werden), ob der Einsatz der Medien reibungslos verlief (Pannen wurden kritisiert, die besonders bei der Bedienung des Diaprojektors noch auftraten), ob der Vortrag frei gesprochen war (im Falle der ausländischen Studentinnen wurde das Ablesen des Vortrags entschuldigt), wie flüssig der Vortragsstil war (häufige Wiederholungen typischer Pausenfüller wie "ja" und Entschuldigungen, z.B. daß nach einer Folie gesucht werden mußte und dadurch eine Pause entstand, wurden kritisiert). Fragen der Vortrags-

gliederung wurden z.T. im Abschnitt "Diskussion zur Sache" abgehandelt, z.B. wurden Verbesserungsvorschläge zum Einstieg in das Thema gemacht. Beispielsweise wurde vorgeschlagen, daß zu Beginn des Vortrags eine Skizze zur Anatomie der Schnecken oder eine Übersicht über die Systematik der betreffenden Tiere gegeben werden sollte.

Welch großen Stellenwert die kommunikativen Fertigkeiten des mündlichen Vortrags in Bonn haben, soll der folgende Auszug aus dem Transkript der Diskussion, die im Anschluß an das Referat der finnischen Studentin stattfand, deutlich machen:

(5)

finnische Studentin: *Ja und denn möchte ich über die Thesenpapier sagen, daß da steht es irgendwo Eisweiß, Stoffwechseln und so was, kleine Fehler (lacht)*

Kursleiter: *Ja, ich verzeih' diese Fehler im Zusammenhang von Frau Rissanen.*

Ja herzlichen Dank. Sie haben also wirklich beide abgehantlt/handelt ... und der Biologie äh die Betonung auf die Biologie gelegt, wie ich auch erhofft habe ... klar gegliedert ... mit geheimem Humor gewürzt ... Daß Sie nich äh ausgesprochen frei, daß Sie nicht frei sprechen konnten, das war, das müssen wir verzeihn, das is' klar. Leider sind auch die Dias durch diese Beleuchtung nicht so ganz gekommen. Sie haben äh hätten vielleicht auch mal an die Tafel gehen können, auch mal einen wissenschaftlichen Namen aufschreiben können. Tafelarbeit fehlte. Und äh diese, das is ne gute Idee, die zu zeigen hier (hält Glas mit Schneckengehäusen hoch), nich, aber vielleicht daß eine flache Schale, die sieht man beide zusammen, dann hätte man das auf einen Blick gehabt. Das wird natürlich auch didaktischen Dingen oder an didaktischen Dingen zu bemängeln etwas. So, wer hat Bemerkungen auf Lager über die Art des Vortrages ... Ja, Herr Hugenschütt

Assistent: *Ja, ich äh find's eigentlich bedauerlich, daß nicht alle Referenten so einen herrlichen Dialekt haben, äh, reizvoll, gell (lacht), dem kann man also wirklich toll folgen einfach weil man schon auf den nächsten Punkt wie "Sleim" oder "Snecke" wartet (allgemeines Lachen) äh, ich find' das also ganz prima und äh (unverständlich). Und ich finde auch oft, daß also vielen deutschen Wissenschaftlern dieser äh Humor fehlt häufig, den du hier oft mit eingebaut hast, so wie "in letzter Zeit auch vom Menschen bedroht, die arme Schnecke!"*

(...)

Studentin: *... wie sie das überhaupt zusammengestellt hat äh, daß sie so 'ne tolle Aussprache schon hat und jetz find' ich hat sie das wirklich für ihre Verhältnisse, eben dafür, daß sie äh vor einem Semester kaum deutsch sprechen konnte, ganz toll vorgetragen. Und eben vor allen Dingen mit diesem Witz, mit diesen Wortspielen, das zeugt wirklich schon davon, daß Du da wirklich mit dem ganzen Gebiet umgehen kannst, sowohl mit der Sprache als auch mit deinen zwei Schnecken hier, wirklich.*

Kursleiter: *Ja, möchte sonst noch jemand eine Bemerkung machen? ... Ja dann zur Sache. Hat jemand da Fragen?* (Diskussion zum Vortrag der finnischen Studentin)

Dieser etwa vier Minuten dauernden Diskussion zur "Form" des Vortrags folgte eine reichlich zwölfminütige zur "Sache", in der vor allem die drei Kursleiter kritische (was von der Studentin noch hätte erwähnt werden sollen) oder ergänzende Kommentare zur Biologie der Schnecken machten. Die Reaktionen der finnischen Studentin beschränkten sich auf nonverbales Zustimmen. In den von mir aufgenommenen Diskussionen zu den Referaten der beiden deutschen Studentinnen war die Kritik am Vortragsstil massiver. Hier wurden auch von den Mitstudenten häufiger Fragen gestellt und die Referentinnen beteiligten sich aktiv an der Diskussion. In ihren Redebeiträgen verteidigten sie meistens die Art und die Inhalte ihrer Vorträge. Sowohl die Referate als auch die Diskussionen dauerten länger als die der finnischen Studentin, insgesamt wurde pro Studentin eine Stunde für Vortrag und Diskussion in Anspruch genommen, während die finnische Studentin schon nach 40 Minuten entlassen wurde. Die Ursache dafür ist jedoch nicht nur in sprachlichen Problemen der finnischen Studentin zu suchen, sondern aus eher ihrem zurückhaltenden Charakter erklärlich. Ihre Reaktionen in den Diskussionen des finnischen Kurses beschränkten sich ebenfalls auf nonverbales Zustimmen. Trotzdem stellte sich im Interview mit der finnischen Studentin heraus, daß die Teilnahme an den Diskussionen in Bonn stärker als in Jyväskylä von den Studenten erwartet wird [vgl. (1)], und die finnische Studentin hier praktisch von ihrem "Ausländerbonus" profitierte:

(6)

Frage:	"Tuntuuko susta, että susta saadaan huonompi kuva, koska et osallistu niin aktiivisesti?" *Hast Du das Gefühl, daß man von Dir ein negativeres Bild bekommt, weil Du nicht aktiv an der Diskussion teilnimmst?*
finnische Studentin:	"No tavallaan, mutt' musta tuntuu että ne kyllä niinku' ymmärtää sen, ett' kun on ulkomaalainen, niin sitten ei niinkun välttämättä vaadita" *Na im Prinzip schon, aber ich glaube, die verstehen schon, daß wenn man Ausländer ist, also dann wird das eben nicht unbedingt verlangt.*
Frage:	"antaa anteeksi" *sie verzeihen*
finnische Studentin:	"Niin. Mutt' muuten kyllä saksalaiset odottaa, että ihmiset osallistuu keskusteluun." *Ja. Aber die Deutschen erwarten schon, daß die Leute sich am Gespräch beteiligen.*

Alle vier von mir in Bonn interviewten Studentinnen betonten, daß die große Belastung eines Referats letztendlich belohnt würde, weil man die Angst vor dem Auftritt mit der Zeit verliere und wirklich lerne, Vorträge zu halten. Außerdem lerne man recht schnell die Kritik am Vortrag schätzen und sie nicht als Kritik an der Person zu interpretieren.

Der Hauptunterschied im Biologiestudium in Jyväskylä und Bonn besteht zusammengefaßt darin, daß in Jyväskylä die schriftlichen Fertig-

keiten, in Bonn jedoch die mündlichen überwiegen. Besonders deutlich wird das beim Vergleich der Textsorte 'studentisches Referat'. In Bonn müssen wesentlich mehr Referate gehalten werden (ein bis zwei Referate pro Block), in Jyväskylä nur zwei (für das Pro- und das Laudaturseminar). Die Kursreferate in Jyväskylä sind so kurz und anspruchslos, daß dafür nicht viel getan werden muß. Das Ergebnis dieser Fallstudie ist jedoch nicht ohne weitere Untersuchungen für deutsche und finnische Universitäten zu verallgemeinern, was auch im Interview mit dem Leiter des Bonner Blockkurses "Ökologie des Wattenmeeres" deutlich wurde:

(7) *"Also es is' allerdings, muß ich sagen, wir, ich denke, daß diese Art hier in Bonn auch nicht so in jeder deutschen Universität ist, nä. Also ich merk' das unsere Studenten, die wir hier aus unsrem Studium entlassen, die die können Vorträge halten ... Man erlebt das dann, wenn man von auswärts Leute einlädt, daß die doch viel größere Probleme haben ... Also ich denke es ist schon hier ganz gut."* (Kneitz, Interview 29. 4. 1993)

Unterschiede kommunikativer Konventionen im Hochschulstudium bestehen also nicht nur zwischen verschiedenen Ländern und Sprachen, sondern auch innerhalb eines Landes gibt es unterschiedliche akademische Kommunikationskulturen. Allerdings weist die Aussage der einen deutschen Biologiestudentin aus Bonn darauf hin, daß mündliche kommunikative Fertigkeiten auch an anderen deutschen Hochschulen eine große Rolle spielen: sie hatte vorher an der Universität Düsseldorf Biologie studiert und meinte, daß dort noch mehr Wert auf das Üben der Vortragstechnik gelegt wurde, als in Bonn (z.B. wurden dort auch Fragen der Körperhaltung des Vortragenden und des Publikumkontakts geübt). Auch zwei weitere Jyväskyläer Studentinnen, die das Studienjahr 1992/93 in Bonn verbrachten, und eine Studentin die im selben Jahr in Graz studierte, bestätigten, daß an den deutschsprachigen Partneruniversitäten mehr Wert auf mündliche Fertigkeiten gelegt wurde als an der finnischen Heimatuniversität. Interessant ist weiterhin, daß auch A. Mauranen (1994, in diesem Heft) beim Vergleich finnischer und britischer Studiensituationen zu einem ähnlichen Ergebnis (Favorisierung schriftlicher Fertigkeiten in Jyväskylä, größere Bedeutung mündlicher Fertigkeiten in Kent) gelangte. Diese Aussagen deuten darauf hin, daß die finnische akademische Tradition stärker theorielastig und auf schriftliche Fertigkeiten fixiert ist als die britische, deutsche und österreichische.

4 ZUSAMMENFASSUNG UND SCHLUßFOLGERUNGEN

Ziel der vorliegenden Fallstudie war, die Kommunikationssituationen des Biologiestudiums in Jyväskylä und Bonn miteinander zu vergleichen. Außerdem wurde exemplarisch die Textsorte 'studentisches Referat' eines "Blockkurses" (in Bonn) mit der eines "Kurses" (in Jyväskylä) verglichen. Zu diesem Zweck wurden die Studienführer Biologie der beiden Universitäten miteinander verglichen und Interviews mit Ausbildern und Studenten durchgeführt. Außerdem wurden die 'studentischen Referate' eines "Kurses" in Jyväskylä beobachtet und protokollarisch festgehalten und die eines "Blockkurses" in Bonn videogefilmt. Probandin der Untersuchung war eine finnische Austauschstudentin, die das Studienjahr 1992/93 an der Universität in Bonn verbrachte.

Die Kommunikationssituationen des Biologiestudiums gleichen sich in Jyväskylä und Bonn oberflächlich gesehen weitgehend: es gibt Vorlesungen, Seminare, Kurse bzw. Blockübungen, Prüfungen und die Diplomarbeit. Schaut man sich die Kommunikationssituationen genauer an, so können z. T. recht große Unterschiede zwischen den in ihnen vorkommenden einzelnen Textsorten und Gesprächstypen sowie in den an sie gestellten kommunikativen Anforderungen und Bewertungskriterien festgestellt werden. Sowohl bei der Analyse der Textsorte 'studentisches Referat' als auch insgesamt gesehen fällt auf, daß im Biologiestudium in Jyväskylä die schriftlichen Fertigkeiten stark favorisiert werden, während in Bonn das Schwergewicht eher auf den mündlichen Fertigkeiten liegt.

Die Ursachen dafür liegen in kulturgebunden unterschiedlichen Auffassungen von 'Fachlichkeit' sowie offensichtlich in verschiedenen Mentalitäten begründet. In Finnland ist Wissenschaftlichkeit auf die Sache reduziert, es wird versucht, möglichst weitgehend von der Person zu abstrahieren. Das ist auch ein Höflichkeitskonzept: alle Charaktere (und besonders die ruhigen, unauffälligen) sind geschätzt. Kritik am Vortragsstil würde z.B. zu leicht als Kritik an der Person verstanden. Akademisches Ziel ist das Schreiben eines Forschungsberichts. In Deutschland ist die Ausbildung stärker handlungsbetont. Interaktive Handlungsfähigkeit und besonders mündliche kommunikative Fertigkeiten sollen entwickelt werden. Kritik am Vortragsstil wird zwar manchmal als hart, nicht jedoch als Kritik an der Person empfunden. Die Studenten schätzen diese hohen Anforderungen im Gegenteil als positiv für die Entwicklung ihrer Fachkenntnisse ein. Akademische Ziele sind das Halten eines mündlichen Referats und das Stellungnehmen zu Fachfragen.

Die Studienbedingungen im Ausland stellen in der Regel andere Anforderungen an die kommunikativen Fertigkeiten als das im Heimat-

land der Fall ist und können deshalb den Studienerfolg wesentlich beeinträchtigen. Im Interesse einer größtmöglichen Effektivität des Auslandsaufenthalts sollten die Austauschstudenten bereits im Heimatland auf die unterschiedlichen kommunikativen Anforderungen äußerlich gleicher Kommunikationssituationen und Textsorten informiert und sprachlich vorbereitet werden. Für finnische Studenten, die in an der Partneruniversität in Bonn studieren wollen, sollte sowohl hinsichtlich vorbereitender Sprachkurse als auch hinsichtlich der Evaluation der Sprachkenntnisse der Schwerpunkt stärker auf den mündlichen Fertigkeiten liegen. Hierbei erweist sich als Problem, daß im traditionellen Sprachenunterricht noch immer zu stark von der Schriftsprache und ihren Normen ausgegangen wird. Das ist kein Wunder, denn es gibt gerade für den akademischen und Hochschulbereich noch zu wenig gesprächsanalytische Untersuchungen einzelner Textsorten oder Gesprächstypen.[5]

Die Austauschstudenten sollten außerdem rechtzeitig die Studienpläne und -anforderungen der Zieluniversität erhalten. Die finnischen Studenten kritisierten besonders die Organisatoren der Austauschprogramme. Es gäbe im Heimatland keine konkreten Informationen dazu, **was** studiert werden könne und **wie** studiert werden müsse. Die finnischen Studentinnen bekamen z.B., als sie im Oktober 1992 zum Wintersemester anreisten, keine der für das Studium wesentlichen Blockplätze mehr, da der Termin für die Bewerbung bereits Ende des vorhergehenden Sommersemesters abgelaufen war. So geht wertvolle Studienzeit verloren, was durch besseren Informationsfluß zwischen den kooperierenden Hochschulen und organisatorische Vorbereitungen vermieden werden könnte. Der Studienberater der Biowissenschaften in Bonn hatte bis zum Eintreffen der finnischen Studentin nicht einmal etwas von dem Austauschprogramm mit der Universität Jyväskylä gewußt, die Post aus Finnland war irgendwo an der Uni Bonn hängengeblieben. Schließlich wünschten sich die Austauschstudenten vorab möglichst viele landeskundliche Informationen, um die deusche Bürokratie vom Wohnungsamt über die Sparkasse bis zum Studiensekretariat erfolgreich bewältigen und einen möglichst reibungslosen Einstieg ins Fachstudium finden zu

[5] Eine Ausnahme ist die gesprächsanalytische Untersuchung universitärer mündlicher Kommunikation im Bereich der Chemie von Klaus Munsberg (1992), die mit dem Ziel durchgeführt wurde, solide fundierte Lehrmaterialien für die Fachsprachendidaktik der Chemie im Bereich Deutsch als Fremdsprache herzzustellen.

können.[6] Eine Broschüre mit Hinweisen zur Lösung solcher praktischer Fragen haben finnische Studenten in Berlin zusammengestellt.[7]

[6] Die von der finnischen Studentin genannten Probleme stimmen mit denen von Floor (1991:133) genannten überein: 1. praktische Schwierigkeiten (unvollständige Informationen über Studienmöglichkeiten, Studieninhalt und Anforderungen bestimmter Fächer), 2. Schwierigkeiten, bei den Studenten und der Bevölkerung des Gastlandes Anschluß zu finden und 3. das Studium direkt betreffende Probleme, wie z.B. andere Arten des Unterrichtsstils.

[7] "Zurück bleiben" (1993). Sie ist kostenlos zu Beziehen im Sekretariat für internationale Beziehungen der Universität Jyväskylä, beim Verein finnischer Studenten in Berlin und im Finnland-Institut Berlin.

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Die Bedeutung von Textsortenwissen für die interkulturelle Kommunikation - Kommunikative Unterschiede im Biologiestudium an den Partneruniversitäten Jyväskylä und Bonn

Sabine Ylönen

The aim of this study was to compare the communicative situations that biology students encounter at the universities of Jyväskylä and Bonn, focusing specifically on the genre "studentisches Referat", which is a paper read by students as part of an intensive course. The subject of this case study was a Finnish exchange student who spent the year 1992/93 at the university in Bonn. Information about the communicative situations was collected by comparing study guides and by interviewing lecturers and students. The genre "studentisches Referat" was compared by observing nine Finnish and videotaping four German paper presentations, and by lecturer and student interviews. The comparison indicates a major difference in the general mode of communication: in Bonn almost all study situations involve oral discourse, whereas in Jyväskylä the written mode dominates. It is therefore suggested that awareness of the scientific communication culture is as important as those skills which are usually considered linguistic, that is lexis, grammar, and phraseology, and that this awareness should be included in preparatory language courses.

Key-words: student exchange programmes, communicative study skills, scientific communication cultures, oral paper presentations

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TEACHING METHODS AND COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS IN STUDY HANDBOOKS AT JYVÄSKYLÄ AND KENT

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1 INTRODUCTION

University handbooks and guides are a central source of information to students making plans for their studies. To pursue their studies successfully students will need to know, for instance, which courses there are to choose from, what the prerequisites and requirements for a course are, what the students are expected to do to fulfil the course requirements, what modes of study and teaching methods (lectures, seminars, examinations,...) are used on the courses and how coursework is assessed. Information of this kind should be included in handbooks, but there may be considerable differences in the ways in which the information is presented in different universities, and, of course there is likely to be variation in the requirements and instructions themselves.

The aim of the present survey is to find out what information can be found in study handbooks and guides available at the University of Jyväskylä and at the University of Kent, and whether there was anything on the kinds of spoken and written forms of communication that are expected from the students taking a certain university course. For this

purpose the survey will focus on the instructions the students are given for writing essays, attending seminars, following lectures, answering exam questions or any other mode of study mentioned in the handbooks. It is also hoped that the survey will show how much emphasis is put on various teaching methods and thereby on different modes of communication at the University of Jyväskylä and at the University of Kent. The handbook information can also be helpful in clarifying some of the differences in academic traditions at the two universities which, in turn, could account for some of the difficulties experienced by most exchange students at the beginning of their exchange programme.

For the part of the University of Jyväskylä the present survey describes what the handbooks say about the teaching methods offered for and the coursework required from the students in five departments (English Philology, History, Journalism, Literature and Psychology). Because the students in this project have completed approximately one third of their studies, the present survey will concentrate on the course descriptions of General Studies and Subject Studies which equal this amount of studies.

The University of Kent provides exchange students with handbooks which are especially intended for exchange and short-term students and which they receive before they leave for their year in Canterbury. In addition to these handbooks, the present survey views all the other guides which the students are offered once they have arrived at the University of Kent. In these handbooks the students can find further information on courses, coursework assessment and course requirements as well as on study techniques. The survey is based on these handbooks and guides in general and on the description of the courses the exchange students had chosen in particular.

In **section 2** of this paper the guides and handbooks will be introduced on a general level with reference to the contents and purpose from the students' point of view: what kind of information can the students find in each one of them? **Section 3** will focus on the teaching methods and course requirements. How are they described in the guides? What are the requirements of a good essay? What are the students expected to do in a seminar? **Section 4** will report on additional course materials, such as instruction handouts for writing an essay etc. **Section 5** is a brief summary of the differences found in the handbooks at the two universities.

2 WHAT INFORMATION DO THE STUDY HANDBOOKS CONTAIN?

At the University of Jyväskylä students have four different handbooks at their disposal with instructions for planning their studies and completing them successfully. *Yleisopas (General Guide)* is a 96-page introduction to student life. It concentrates on technicalities, from university administration to study finance. It deals with other general issues such as the student health service, housing services and the discounts the students are entitled to. The *General Guide* informs the students briefly of other published sources of information (to be introduced below) and mentions the 'tutor guidance system' the newcomers are offered in groups of approximately 10 students. The tutors are older students who are well acquainted with the university system. According to the *General Guide*, the tutors help the members of the group with any problems they may have at the beginning of their studies and the studying itself. In addition, the students are given study guidance at the departments. The *General Guide* does not touch upon teaching methods or modes of study. It is a booklet on general issues - administrative instructions, financial matters, extra-curricular activities - all of which the student will find useful when becoming a member of the new community.

Each of the five fields of study at Jyväskylä (Humanities, Education, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and Sport Sciences) has *Opinto-opas (Study Guide)* of its own which is published every two years. These guides contain some of the statutes and degree regulations which define the objectives, structure and extent of the basic degree within a Degree Programme. For example, the students of English Philology need to know the degree regulations of their own general field of study (= Humanities), the aims and instructions concerning the basic degree of their own Degree Programme (= Foreign Languages) and the specific instructions given by the Department of English. The department-specific regulations in the *Study Guide* usually cover such themes as the general conventions of the department, the aims of the instruction given at the department, a general description of studies, a suggested timetable for the progress of studies and, finally and most importantly, a description of the Study Modules which are the basic structural and thematic units of the Finnish basic degree. The study modules are classified with respect to their contents and their position in the curriculum, into three or four different types: General Studies, (Introductory Studies), Subject Studies and Advanced Studies. One study module consists of different courses which contain several types of teaching methods: lectures, exercises, examinations based on compulsory reading, seminars, etc. A detailed description of these modes of studying will be presented in the third section of this survey.

In sum, the purpose of the *Study Guide* is to present the structure, contents and extent of the Finnish basic degree which is considered to be equivalent to the Anglo-American master's degree. In the *Study Guide* are defined the statutes, degree regulations and curricula, which constitute the structure and main contents of the Degree Programme. The most important function of the *Study Guide* is to give a description of the courses to the students. It is typical that the core courses given in the curriculum of each Degree Programme and department are all compulsory. The number of optional courses appears to be small: there is usually a mention if a course is optional.

In the *Study Guide* the students learn that they are required to complete a certain number of courses in spoken and written communication skills both in the mother tongue and in foreign languages as part of the General Studies study module. *Yliopiston kielikeskuksen opinto-opas (Language Centre Study Guide)* introduces the structure of and the recommended timetable for language studies, and the materials to be used on the courses. In the guide the students can find information on how to register on a course, what teaching methods will be used and how the coursework will be assessed. After the general introduction the optional elementary and continuation language courses which are available to students from all fields of study are introduced. A short description of the courses is also given as well as their dates and places. Lastly, the compulsory, faculty-specific communication and language courses are presented with short course descriptions, the dates and places of instruction. The guide presents all the compulsory and optional courses which the Language Centre arranges.

Yliopiston ohjelma (*University Programme)* is published once a year. The *Programme* is a list of the courses which are described in the *Study Guide*. In the *Programme* the students find the name of the course, its code, the name(s) of the teacher(s), the dates and the places where the lectures, excercises, tutorials, seminars, etc. are arranged and the date of the exam. The *Programme* is an essential guide for the students when they are planning their timetables.

This brief introduction to the contents of the official study handbooks at the University of Jyväskylä indicates that the four booklets described above all contain different information: The *General Guide* leads the students to university life providing them mostly with information on extra-curricular, practical issues. The *Study Guide* - and, to some extent, the *Language Centre Study Guide* - contain information most directly relevant for the students pursuing their studies. In these guides is collected all the information available on the subject the students have chosen, the requirements set for their coursework by the Faculties and the departments as well as the teaching methods on offer for them. In the *Programme* the students can find where and when the courses take place. However, it must be pointed out that the teaching methods and

coursework requirements mentioned in the *Study Guide* are brief and even superficial. It appears that the various departments even within the same Faculty do not follow a common set of rules for their courses and modes of study.

At the University of Kent the students have four different handbooks available. Two of them are especially designed to meet the needs of exchange and short-term students. The *Information Booklet* is a 19-page orientation guide which gives a brief account of a wide range of topics, such as the British banking system, clothing, university accommodation, academic requirements and a short introduction to teaching methods (lectures, seminars, essay writing). The booklet is a survival guide - it contains information on the essential issues exchange students need to consider when they arrive at a new community. The booklet does not hold any information on the contents of the courses.

The other guide intended especially for exchange students is the *Catalogue of Courses*. The general introduction informs the students about the characteristics of the university, its collegiate system, the interdisciplinary nature of studies, the university Diploma courses and the Degree Programmes. In the general introduction there is also a short section on the teaching methods and the examinations, the credit system and a reference to the other guides (= *Part I & II Handbooks*; see below) which elaborate the information given in the *Catalogue of Courses*. The introduction is followed by a section where the Programmes of Study for the University Diploma are defined. The names of the courses on offer to exchange students are listed under the name of each Diploma. The rest of the catalogue, approximately 60 pages, concentrates on the description of the aims and contents of the undergaduate courses on offer in Humanities, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences and Information Technology. The main purpose of the *Catalogue of Courses* is to help the exchange students to decide, before they leave for their year at the university of Kent, which courses to take during that year.

The handbooks described above are intended for exchange and short-term students only. The following booklets are useful for both exchange students and for students who are taking courses leading to a BA, LLB, BSc or Beng degree.

The *Part I Handbooks*, which are published by each faculty once a year, are designed to help the first year students to plan their studies according to the subject they intend to study during the second and the final year. The preparatory, Part I prerequisite courses as well as a table of restrictions are given in the guide. The introductory part of the handbook has also a short section on examinations and the assessment of student performance, plagiarism, academic disciplinary procedures, reading weeks, teaching hours and coursework deadlines. After this 19-page introduction the courses are described. Finally, the last pages contain

the teaching timetable with days and times for lectures, seminar groups, etc. listed.

The *Part II Handbooks* are similar to *Part I Handbooks* in structure and in content. In the 10-page introductory part the students are given a detailed description of the assessment of student performance. They are also reminded of the teaching methods, examinations, plagiarism, academic disciplinary procedures and the reading weeks. After the introduction there is a section where the Degree Programmes are defined with the core courses and option courses listed. The main part of the *Part II Handbook* is dedicated to the description of the courses. These will be summarized below in the third section.

The *Part I* and *Part II Handbooks* are an important source of information also to the exchange student. They contain detailed information on, for instance, the assessment of student performance and the lists of preliminary reading the student is expected to do before attending a course. This information they cannot find in the *Catalogue of Courses*.

Part II Handbook has many references to the *Study Hints* booklet (approx. 30 pages), a guide to the methods of studying. It includes a section on how to approach lectures, seminars and reading. In addition, ten pages of the booklet are dedicated to essay writing. On the last six pages the guide also deals with memory as an aid to study and how to prepare for examinations. Furthermore, there are sections on aspects of university life and student involvement. The instructions given for e.g. essay writing or seminar attendance will be summed up in section 3 below. The *Study Hints* booklet is an essential guide to first year students in that it creates a common set of rules for their coursework. In this handbook the students are given instructions for writing essays and on how to make the most of a seminar, regardless of their subject. The handbook may prove to be useful for exchange students who are not familiar with the academic traditions of the exchange university.

In short, there are two official handbooks at the University of Kent for the exchange and short-term students and two handbooks for the students who are taking courses leading to a degree. The exchange students' other handbook, the *Information Booklet*, contains information on general, extra-curricular issues, whereas the *Catalogue of Courses* concentrates on the contents of the courses. These handbooks provide the exchange students with basic information on teaching methods and coursework requirements but they will need to consult the *Part I & II Handbooks* and the *Study Hints* booklet for further information. It appears that at the University of Kent there is an aspiration to have a common set of rules for the description of courses, teaching methods and coursework requirements, regardless of subject.

3 HOW ARE TEACHING METHODS AND COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS DESCRIBED IN THE HANDBOOKS?

As was seen in section 2, the handbooks at Jyväskylä and Kent differ in the way the information concerning the teaching methods and coursework requirements is divided between them. At the University of Jyväskylä both the requirements set on coursework as well as the teaching methods used at the various departments are mentioned, but not described in detail. At the University of Kent, there are separate handbooks for the detailed description of the teaching methods used and the required coursework.

At the University of Jyväskylä all departments follow the same standard in describing the courses. Despite this there is considerable variation in styles even within the same faculty. The most detailed description of the courses in the *Study Guide* has the following pattern:

* the name of the course
* aim and content
* mode of study
* assessment
* reading material

The name of the course is an important part of the course description. In some cases it may even be the sole definition of a course, together with a list of the compulsory reading to be done during the course.

The 'aim and content' section forms the core of most of the course descriptions. It is often a list of some of the issues to be dealt with during a course or it can be a definition of the areas of major interest. Usually the 'aim and content' is related only to the intellectual content of the discipline and not to the development of academic skills such as oral proficiency or essay writing.

The modes of study named in the descriptions are lecture, excercises of various kind, tutorials, seminars, essays, and reading. The courses usually consist of one mode of study only. For instance, a lecture course on Modern Cultural History lasts one term after which there is an examination based on the lectures. It is usual that the modes of study are not defined in great detail in the *Study Guide*. This could mean, for instance, that the students are expected to adopt the forms of seminar communication when attending one and that the teachers are expected to provide the students with instructions for essay writing in the seminars. At some departments the modes of study are given in the *Programme*.

The methods of assessment for a course are usually given as an 'examination' or an 'essay', sometimes combined with 'continuous

assessment' or 'active participation'. The assessment is often marked on a numerical scale 1 - 3 but the contents of a 'good' essay or examination answer are left undescribed.

A list of reading material is given at the end of the course description. It appears that there are three different types of lecture courses with regard to the amount of reading expected of the students. 1) On many lecture courses the students are not required to do any reading in addition to their lecture notes to pass an exam. 2) On some lecture courses the students are expected to do some preliminary reading, but in many cases the reading is expected to be completed by the day of the exam. 3) The third alternative is that the students are free to make a choice between a lecture course and an exam based on the reading given in the list.

An example of the course descriptions to be found in the *Study Guide* is given in the following with some further definitions from the *Programme*. The most detailed information is given at the Department of English and at the Department of History, where the description contains the name of the course, the aim and contents of the course, the modes of study, assessment and the reading lists:

Dept. of *English*	Institutions, 3 study weeks Aim and content: To get an insight into British and American society and culture. The development of intensive and critical reading, the examination of various textual and stylistic means. Modes of study: Lectures, exercises and essays; two terms. Assessment: Continuous assessment and essays. Reading list: A selection of texts.

The course descriptions of the Department of Literature are brief. The aim and the content of the courses are not described. The information on the modes of study is missing or it can be found in the *Programme*. The methods of assessment are not mentioned but there is a reference to the examination timetable, which the students can find on the noticeboard of the department. Most of the information concerning the aim and contents of a course can be gathered from the name of the course and the list of required reading.

At the Department of Journalism the aims of the studies have been described at the beginning of each study module. For instance the aim of the Introductory Studies is 'to make the students versed in the fundamental principles and theoretical background of mass media, their function, position, structure and regulation as well as the principles of journalistic work.' In the following one example of the courses of the Introductory Studies is given.

Dept. of Journalism	Basic course in Communication Studies, 3 study weeks -lecture Reading list: Three books The required reading will be examined on a general examination day.

At the Department of Psychology it is required that the students acquaint themselves with the texts listed in the *Study Guide* before attending a lecture course. The courses are described very briefly. Information on the modes of study can be found in the *Programme*. Similarly, the method of assessment is not mentioned in the *Study Guide* but the date of the examination is given in the *Programme*.

Even the most detailed descriptions of the teaching methods and the coursework requirements in the *Study Guides* are very concise. In those descriptions where the teaching method or the mode of study is mentioned at all, the type of discourse that is required of the students is expected to be known to them or it becomes evident during the course. There are no instructions to be found in the *Study Guide* concerning the extent and contents of the students' written work or the oral proficiency and the roles of the participants of a seminar. Neither are there references to any other sources of information where these problems would be dealt with in some detail.

An example of how a seminar is described:

Dept. of Journalism	Proseminar, 3 study weeks -participation in seminar work (a minor research paper, the role of the opponent, active participation) Reading list: Two books The reading is to be examined at the latest by the beginning of the proseminar.

It was mentioned in section 2 that the Finnish basic degree is divided into study modules of different levels: General Studies (Introductory Studies), Subject Studies and Advanced Studies. Each of these modules consists of a number of courses which contain different types of teaching methods. A comparison of the teaching methods and the modes of study named in the *Study Guide* shows that there are both similarities and differences between the departments. The five departments are similar in that they all offer the students somewhat more lecture courses in the Introductory part of the studies than at a later stage. At the same time as the number of lecture courses diminishes, more emphasis is put on reading and written work in the Subject Studies module.

On the basis of the information given in the handbooks it is not possible to give a more detailed picture of the contents of the modes of study at the University of Jyväskylä. However, a comparison of the departments reveals the following differences. The students of Literature can be expected to be familiar with working independently because most of the courses in the Introductory Studies and especially in the Subject Studies consist of an examination based on the compulsory reading listed in the *Study Guide*. This is also the case at the Department of History even though the students are free to choose whether to take a lecture course on a certain subject or an exam based on compulsory reading. The comparison also shows that the students of English and Journalism have

considerably more teaching in small groups, excercise groups and tutorials. This would indicate that they are more used to spoken communication as part of their studies than, for instance, the students of Literature or History. This is, of course, connected with the more communicative nature of their studies. It is included in the general requirements of the Department of English that 'good oral and written skills in English are prerequisites for completing the degree' and at the Department of Journalism 'special attention will be paid to written and oral expression.'

At the University of Kent the exchange students can find information on the courses on offer and the required coursework in the *Catalogue of Courses* where the courses of all the four faculties are described according to uniform standards. The courses are further defined in the *Part I & II Handbooks*. A typical description of a course in both *Handbooks*, independent of subject area or faculty, has the following pattern:

* the name of the course and the teacher
* aim and content
* (recommendations)
* preliminary reading
* method of examination

The 'aim and content' of the course is usually a much longer and more detailed description of the issues of interest than in the *Study Guide (Jyväskylä)*. Sometimes, at the end of the 'aim and content' section, the course can be recommended especially to certain students or the prerequisites of the course may be further defined. The list of 'preliminary reading' implies that some reading is expected to be done before attending a course. On most of the courses the required preliminary reading introduces the students to the writings of three or more authors. The final mark for the courses is generally based on a combination of the coursework mark (20 %) and the mark for the written examination (80%), unless otherwise stated in the course description. In the following, two characteristic course descriptions are given, one from the Humanities and one from the Social Sciences. The first description is taken from the *Catalogue of Courses* and the latter one from the *Part II Handbook*.

Catalogue of Courses (for short-term and exchange students):

Philosophy **H705: Aesthetics: Second Year**
This course is intended to introduce traditional aesthetics, and consequently it will be concerned with philosophical attempts to deal with such questions as: What is art? What is beauty? What is an aesthetic experience? What are the criteria for aesthetic judgements and taste? In the first term, the approach will be through the study of major authors including Plato and Hume. The second term focuses on problems raised by specific art forms; students will be required to study two areas from a list which normally includes literature, painting, drama and film.

Part II Handbook:

Politics & Internat. Relations

S314 International Relations

This is an introductory course. The first section traces the developments of the study of international relations, including its role in classical political theory and its emergence as an academic discipline in the inter-war years of this century. The second section examines the three main theoretical perspectives now dominating the field - 'realism', 'pluralism' and 'structuralism'. The third section surveys sub-fields such as foreign policy analysis, international political economy, international organisation and normative theory.

Preliminary Reading: Six books

Note: S314 is compulsory for Single Honours Politics and International Relations and International Relations and French students, and is available as an option and 'wild' course for those students who want a theoretically oriented introduction to the subject.

Method of examination: 10% coursework, 90% written examination

The coursework requirements are given in the general introduction of the *Catalogue of Courses* and the *Part I & II Handbooks*. According to these guides, each of the four courses the students are required to take during an academic year is assessed by a three-hour written examination in the third term. In addition to the examination the students are required to complete a certain amount of coursework. On most of the courses the coursework is a combination of written work, oral performance in the seminar and seminar attendance. The students are usually assigned three to four essays per course. The topics of the essays are given in the additional course materials or on separate handouts (see section 4), and the topics are related to the issues taken up on the lectures and in the seminars.

The *Study Hints* booklet is intended as a source of guidelines on how to approach university study. It is intended to be used selectively and as a source of hints when the students are faced with problems in their studies. The booklet is also referred to in the other handbooks because it covers a wide range of topics which are central to the students' work, such as study habits, analysis and criticism of lectures, seminars, supervisions, books and articles, the writing of summaries, extracts, seminar papers, essays, reports and theses. The following is a summary of the description of lectures, seminars and essay writing to be found in the *Study Hints* booklet. It must be pointed out that the modes of study could not be similarly summarized at the University of Jyväskylä because they were not sufficiently described in the handbooks.

A lecture is described as a method of teaching which can help the students form an up-to-date picture of a field of study. Because a lecture

yields a condensed account of the subject which is being studied, the benefit derived from it depends on what the students do before, during and after the lecture. It is therefore suggested that the students should acquaint themselves with the course outline (see section 4), which has the lecture titles, and that they should read, or at least skim some of the recommended preparatory literature before attending the lecture. The importance of the students' note-taking skills during the lecture, which are a combination of active listening and critical evaluation, are stressed. Sufficiently comprehensive lecture notes are said to aid concentration and to help revising a subject. It is also suggested that the students should go through the notes after each lecture to avoid ambiguities and missing themes or connections in their notes.

Seminars may differ in how well-structured or formal they are. In some seminars the students may be expected to take notes but the main difference between a lecture and a seminar is that in a seminar the students have an opportunity, or an obligation, to participate. It is mentioned that the effectiveness of a seminar as a teaching method depends on student participation: in a seminar the students' problems in dealing with the material under study can be discussed effectively, and they can be approached from new perspectives. This is possible if the members of the seminar group are willing to contribute to the discussion by preparing adequately for a seminar and by, for instance, overcoming their shyness. Lack of preparation and shyness are reasons which can have a dampening effect on many participants. Also students who make too dominant a contribution to the discussion may affect the seminar group similarly, as well as students who are not willing to share the benefits of their hard work with the other seminar members.

Overall, in the *Study Hints* handbook participation is considered to be the central characteristic of seminar work. To ensure that the seminar will not be a waste of time for many people the students are expected to do at least some of the recommended reading. The students are also encouraged to make some contribution, a comment or a question, early in the seminar so as not to adopt merely the role of a listener. To make participation easier for all seminar members the students are advised to involve each other in the discussion.

The *Study Hints* booklet has a 10-page section on essay writing because the students are expected to do 'rather a lot of writing... during any academic year.' In the booklet essay writing is described as an essential educational process where the writers are compelled to articulate what they have learnt of a subject. This requires that the students organize their thoughts on paper in a way which is accessible to the reader. Writing an essay also shows how experienced the students are in using other writers' work as sources and in critical reasoning.

According to the booklet, the process of writing can be divided into three stages of work: the process of getting started, the planning

stage, and, finally, the writing and editing stage. Once the students have overcome the difficulty of beginning the writing process they are advised to plan, on the one hand, how to approach the background of the subject by reading relevant source material, and, on the other hand, how to sketch the framework to the essay. It is suggested that the students begin by acquainting themselves with the recommended reading, but if they want to write an essay which bears signs of independent work they should find additional material from the library. The students are also reminded of the flexibility of the framework or the plan they have set for the essay. When the students are gathering material from the reading they may realize that the plan for the essay may need revising. The students are reassured that their thoughts will clarify during the writing and, especially, the editing process. Even during the first writing it is advised that the students should pay special attention to the three main parts of the essay: to the introduction by making it interesting for the reader, the paragraph structure by making it organized and easy to follow, as well as to the conclusion which should correspond to the introduction. It is pointed out that the first draft very rarely is worth submitting as such. In the editing phase, it is essential that the students check, first of all, how the essay is structured and organized and if the introduction and conclusion are consistent with each other. Secondly, the students are advised to scrutinize the conceptual clarity and the relevance of each section, paragraph and sentence to find out if they could be clarified further or, if possible, summarized. The third point of importance is the style of writing. The essay should be critically assessed for any ambiguities, incomplete sentences, missing references, awkward expressions, and superfluous adjectives which should be re-written. After the description of the three stages of essay writing some related themes are dealt with. For instance, the students are reminded of the dangers of plagiarism when using source materials, and they are introduced to the principles of quotation, citation and referring to source materials, all of which are illustrated with examples. At the end of the section on essay writing there are paragraphs on the essay style, sexist language and spelling, which contribute to the impression the essay conveys of the student's general abilities.

The importance of writing is emphasized because in the writing process the students are required to take a more active role in studying than, for instance, on a passive lecture or in reading. Writing is the most active aspect of university education and at the same time it is also the most demanding. The booklet endeavours to make writing a less painful and more manageable experience for the students. In the booklet writing is regarded as a skill which the students can organize and develop by reducing it to stages, such as described in the booklet, and by learning from the feedback they receive on the work.

4 ADDITIONAL COURSE MATERIALS AND INSTRUCTIONS

At the University of Jyväskylä, the additional course materials with descriptions of teaching methods and coursework requirements are scarce. The departments of English, History, Journalism, Literature and Psychology were inquired about other official instructions on seminars or essay writing than the ones given in the descriptions of the departments and the courses in the *Study Guide*. The Department of English has two additional handbooks. The *Course Guide 1992-1993* is an extended English version of the *Study Guide* description and the *Style Guide* is a draft-version handbook on the writing of the Pro Gradu (Master's) thesis. At the other departments there are no other official guides or handouts available. At most departments, in the case of seminars and essay writing, the lecturers in charge of the courses were referred to for further information. Also the importance of Finnish Writing Seminar was emphasized. The following is a description of the Seminar according to the *Course Guide* of the Department of English. The Finnish Writing Seminar is a compulsory course in the General Studies study module for all students from all faculties.

General Studies

Finnish Writing Seminar, 2 study weeks

The Language Centre is in charge of the course but it is organized in cooperation with the department. The course has two instructors: a lecturer from the Language Centre and a lecturer from the department.
Aim and Content: The aim of the course is to develop writing skills so that the students can present a reseach paper in Finnish in their own field of study, i.e. to communicate information and ideas learnt and developed in the subject area. The students prepare a paper independently on a topic chosen from any area taught in the department. Guidance is available from both course instructors. Every paper is presented and discussed in a seminar session by two opponents and the rest of the group. On the basis of the seminar discussion, each student will produce a final version of the paper, making all the necessary changes to the paper suggested by the opponents and the group. The emphasis during the course is heavily on the actual process of writing.
Timing: It is recommended that students take the course at the earliest in the spring term of their second year but preferably in their third year. This ensures enough background for topic choices. It is strongly recommended that this seminar be taken before Research Writing.
Attendance: Attendance is required in every session. This means that you should show up at the very first session to confirm your enrolment on the course.
Assessment: Pass/fail.

This description of the course is more comprehensive than that of the *Language Centre Study Guide*. For example, it is emphasized that the students should take the course after two or three years of studying. The tendency is that courses on which the students are expected to compose a minor research paper are recommended to be taken at a later stage, independent of department or faculty.

In addition to the inquiry at the departments, the six students in this project were asked what extra course materials they have been given during their studies. Only two of them could produce handouts with instructions on essay writing. The one from the Department of History is a set of detailed technical instructions for preparing a text for publication. The instructions are related to the layout of the text and the references, how different sources are referred to, and how the source references are listed. The handout from the Department of Sociology is intended for students who have sociology as their subsidiary subject and who can therefore pass the course by writing an essay. It is suggested that the essay could be based on articles published in Finnish sociological journals, the names of which are given to the students. They are encouraged to use imagination in deciding their approach to the subject. According to the brief instructions, it is not necessary for the students to refer to the sources in the text but they are to be listed at the end of the paper. The essay should have a short introduction where the approach to the subject is described. After this the theme(s) is (are) to be dealt with. Finally, the essay should contain a summary of the findings and observations. The recommended length of the essay is 5 - 10 typewritten sheets.

These two examples indicate how different the written assignments can be and how differently they can be approached. In the first description the contents of the essay are not considered as important as the formal side. In the second description the student can decide whether to refer to the sources in the text or not, but the text must include an introduction, a section where the themes are worked on, a conclusion, and a list or references.

In the beginning of the 1980s the University of Jyväskylä published *Opiskelutekniikan opas* (*Handbook on Study Techniques*). The 37-page guide was used on a lecture course of study techniques in the beginning of university studies, and the students got one study week for attending this compulsory course. The booklet covered topics such as attitudes towards studying, the planning of university studies, and the learning process. At the student adviser's office they could not tell why the *Handbook on Study Techniques* is no longer published. One reason could be that the university endeavours to develop the Tutor-guidance system, which takes place at the beginning of the studies, as well as the department-specific study guidance carried by the assistants.

At the University of Kent the most important additional course materials are the Course Outline handouts given at the beginning of each

course. The handout is written by the lecturer in charge of the course and contains in most cases a wealth of detailed information about the particular course. In the following, two handouts are briefly described. How the corresponding courses are described in the *Catalogue of Courses* and the *Part II Handbook* is dealt with in section 3.

The Course Outline handout for **International Relations S314** is a very comprehensive, 19 page description of the course. It starts with a one page introduction to the subject of international relations and politics, which emphasizes the theoretical approach adopted on the course. After the introduction, the section 'teaching methods and course assessment' sets out the formal requirements for the course. There will be one lecture per week and each student will be assigned to a seminar group with 10-12 others which will meet weekly. Students are required to write four essays, and the course will be examined 10% by coursework and 90% by written examination. The examination will be three hours in length and students will be expected to answer three questions.

'Reading for the course' encourages students to use the resources of the library to the full. The section also gives tips on which books cover a high proportion of topics in the course and, therefore, are considered worth buying. Finally, a list of the most useful periodicals is included.

'Course programme' (12 pages) details the topics of each lecture, seminar and essay question. The section also includes the lists of required and further reading for each week. The lists of further reading are particularly comprehensive, with comments on individual books.

Appendix 1 shows a sample exam paper and appendix 2 is an informal guide to lectures, seminars and essays, expressing the personal views of the lecturer. Finally, the essay marking system is briefly explained.

The Course Outline handout for **Aesthetics H705** is more concise (6 pages) and concentrates on factual information such as the topics and dates of the weekly lectures and seminars as well as required and further reading. Also included are possible topics for first essay and a short description of coursework grades.

5 SUMMARY OF DIFFERENCES IN THE STUDY HANDBOOKS AT THE TWO UNIVERSITIES

This survey shows that there are considerable differences in the ways that the spoken and written forms of communication expected from the students are described in the official handbooks and guides available at Jyväskylä and at Kent.

The main difference between the two universities is in how detailed the information given to students is. Compared with Kent the information available **at the University of Jyväskylä** appears very brief and even superficial; for instance, in some cases the name of the course may be the sole definition of it, together with a list of the compulsory reading. Furthermore, it is usual that the modes of study are not explained in great detail, if at all. This suggests that the students are expected to adopt the forms of e.g. seminar communication when attending one. Similarly, it appears that the teachers are expected to provide the students with instructions for essay writing and other written work. The assessment is usually described on a numerical scale but the contents of e.g. a good essay or examination answer are not defined. Overall, it would seem that the various departments even within the same faculty do not aspire to establish a common set of rules for their courses and modes of study.

At the University of Kent there are separate handbooks for the detailed description of the teaching methods used and the required coursework, and the courses of all faculties are dealt with according to uniform standards. The 'aim and content' (in *Part I & II Handbooks*) is invariably a much longer and more detailed description of the issues of interest than in the *Study Guide* (Jyväskylä). Furthermore, the course description usually includes a list of preliminary reading, which implies that some reading is expected to be done before attending a course. The assessment of student performance is explained in detail in the *Part II Handbook*. Also available at the University of Kent is the *Study Hints* booklet, which introduces the guidelines on how to approach university studies. It covers a wide range of topics which are crucial to students' work, such as general study habits, lectures, seminars, supervisions, books and articles, examinations, seminar papers and essays. A total of 10 pages is dedicated to essay writing and, as a rule, the importance of writing is emphasized.

Overall, it appears that the study handbooks at Kent include all the necessary information students need when planning their studies at university. The courses, course requirements, modes of study, teaching methods as well as coursework assessment are all described in detail. In the handbooks at Jyväskylä, students are less likely to find the

information they need to plan and pursue their studies successfully. This implies that they have to spend more time consulting their teachers, particularly at the beginning of their studies.

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Teaching methods and coursework requirements in study handbooks at Jyväskylä and Kent

Markku Helin - Janne Hopeela

This paper reports on the information that is available to students in the various guidebooks that universities provide for new students. We have looked at the material at Jyväskylä and Kent, and this survey suggests that different things are required from students' communication in the Finnish and the English system. Moreover, it appears that the guidance given to Jyväskylä students in written documents is even more meagre than that offered to Kent students, in particular as concerns the 'how' of university studies, that is, things like study habits and skills, and what the different modes of study mean. This report provides background information to the comparisons of discourses which actually take place in the universities.

Key words: student guidance, course requirements, teaching methods, spoken and written communication

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A STUDY YEAR ABROAD: EXCHANGE STUDENTS' ASSESSMENTS OF THEIR ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

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1 INTRODUCTION

This article is based on our pro gradu (M.A.) thesis on potential language difficulties of Finnish exchange students during an academic year in a British University (Harjula and Manninen 1993). The informant group consisted of 48 Jyväskylä University students, who had spent an academic year at the University of Kent at Canterbury during the academic years 1989-90, 1990-91, and 1991-92. The aim of the study was to find out how well the exchange students cope in a culturally unfamiliar context which requires communicative use of English. Deficient language skills may cause frustration and, in the worst case, prevent the students from making the most of their study year abroad. The prime motivation for the study thus stemmed from a need to obtain first-hand information on potential language problems from experts of the exchange programme: the participants themselves.

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data for the study was gathered through two research methods: questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire was sent to all of the students, and 83 percent of them, 40 students, returned it by the end of the summer 1992. The interviews were conducted in December 1992, and in January 1993.

Since the informants in related surveys have usually been of culturally different origins, or the surveys have otherwise been conducted from a slightly different angle (eg. Lindeberg et al. 1992), no ready-made questionnaire could be used in the study. However, several related studies (eg. James 1977, Johnson and Morrow 1977, Price 1977, Morrison 1978, Ostler 1980, Christison and Krahnke 1986, Maiworm et al. 1991, Weir 1984) were consulted and the language problems identified in them were taken as a starting point in the design of the questionnaire. Our own experiences of studying in English were also made use of in the design process, which was completed by making a few alterations on the basis of a pilot run.

The questionnaire consisted of two major parts: questions on the informants' background and on their experiences at the University of Kent. The background questions concentrated on matters which may have influenced the informants' linguistic performance in Kent: maintenance of language skills after the upper secondary school, longer periods of stay abroad, and preparation for the study year in Kent. In addition to these, the field of study of the informants was inquired about, because their former study experience in English and knowledge of subject-matter are likely to affect their studying abroad to some extent.

The main purpose of the questionnaire was to find out whether or not the informant group had experienced linguistic difficulties in academic situations. The informants were asked to assess the sufficiency of their English language proficiency by rating certain communicative tasks on a four-point scale (1=sufficient for all purposes, 2=sufficient for most purposes, 3=occasionally insufficient, and 4=often insufficient). In the questionnaire, the communicative tasks were arranged under the following academic situations: lectures, seminars and tutorials, and private study. The main area of interest as to lectures was the role of language and speech style of the lecturers, ie. how well the students understood their speech and could take notes of the lextures. In seminars and tutorials the students were asked to rate the sufficiency of their English skills mainly in tasks connected with oral participation (eg. expressing opinions and using subject-related vocabulary in discussions). Private study included tasks connected with individual processing of information both in reading the source material and writing essays (eg.

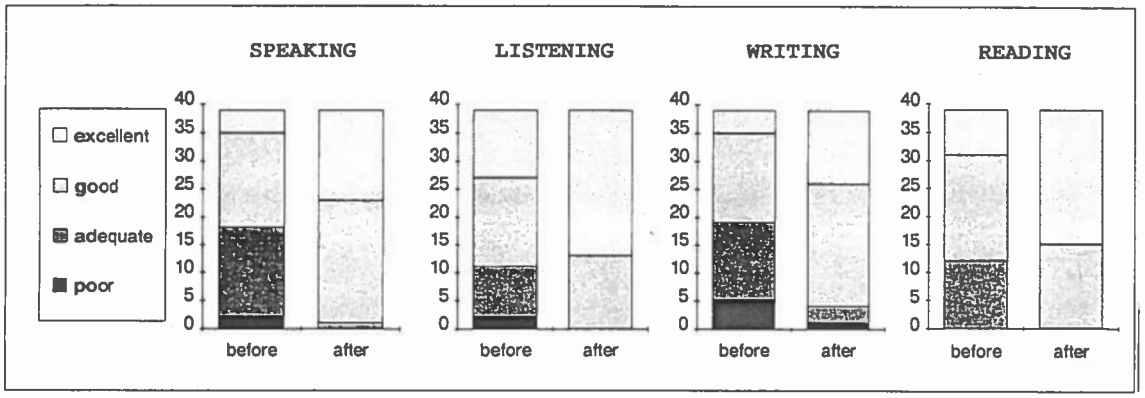
summarizing textbook information in their own words and structuring their essays).

Spending a study year abroad entails that the student copes with his or her language skills not only academically but also socially in everyday situations. This was taken into account by asking the informants to assess their English language proficiency in some communicative tasks outside academic studies (eg. understanding colloquial English and making official phone-calls). The aim in formulating the tasks was to find a compromise between broad, over-generalizing items, and specific, linguistically complex ones to assure that the questionnaire could easily be comprehended by the informants. The informants' self-assessments were analysed in terms of the four language skills: listening, speaking, writing, and reading.

Although the informants were specifically asked to rate the communicative tasks in terms of the sufficiency of their English language proficiency only, the possibility of other influencing factors, eg. unfamiliarity of the academic context, was taken into account in analysing the results. This is also one of the reasons why six semi-structured interviews were conducted: to give some informants a chance to analyse their difficulties in their own words and connect them with other than linguistic factors whenever necessary. For example, the interviewees were asked to describe their potential difficulties in adjusting to British culture. It was considered that the two research methods combined would give a more accurate picture of the informants' language difficulties.

In addition to determining the students' language problems, an attempt was also made to determine the extent to which the study year abroad improves foreign language proficiency by inquiring about the students' impressions on the overall development of their English language skills. The informants' comments on the development of their English language proficiency were assumed to indicate which communicative tasks remained problematic throughout the study year, and which could be overcome after the initial stages of the study period. It was expected that the results would give implications on the potential need for a preliminary language course for future participants of similar exchange programs. Table 1. shows the results of these inquiries.

TABLE 1: Improvement of language skills during the year abroad



3 RESULTS

It can be assumed that Finnish university students generally possess a relatively high level of English language proficiency, because they have studied English for several years in high school and upper secondary school. The informants of the study had also been exposed to the English of their own fields in connection with their university studies. The questionnaire results indicated that English language skills had been practised actively prior to the study period in Kent, but the use of English in academic situations had concentrated on listening and reading.

Some of the problems encountered in studying abroad may be directly related to unfamiliar features in the foreign academic context, but the role of language proficiency cannot be overlooked. The academic settings that were involved in the study include lectures, seminars/ tutorials, and private study. Naturally, in each situation some language skills are more dominant than others, but the development of all language skills plays a significant role in the student's overall success in academic studies. In general, all the settings are familiar to the Finnish undergraduates as a part of their academic studies in Finland, but they demand both cultural adjustment and an adequate level of English from the students.

3.1 Listening

In general, listening in various situations proved rather unproblematic for the informants. The majority of the informants regarded their listening skills as excellent or good already prior to the study year in Kent, which may partially be explained by their numerous travelling experiences and contacts with foreign friends. Despite the good command of listening skills experienced by the students, a notable development took place during the study period. In fact, the majority of the informants regarded their overall listening skills as excellent after the study year. Although the informants' previous experiences of academic listening had been relatively few, other listening experiences seem to have contributed positively to coping with both academic and everyday situations requiring listening skills. The structure of lectures in Kent was usually similar to that in Jyväskylä, and thus it is likely that differing cultural conventions had a minor influence on the informants' performance.

Nevertheless, successful listening to lectures was sometimes hindered by unfamiliar scientific terminology, which also disturbed the note-taking process. Comprehending scientific expressions and theoretical terminology in spoken English proved difficult, although many lecturers supported the students' acquisition of subject-related information by giving them a preliminary reading list. Taking notes in English was basically an unfamiliar activity for the informants, and this was reflected in the informants' assessments. Taking clear notes quickly enough and writing down whole sentences proved difficult to some of the informants, as seen in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Making notes quickly enough in the course of the lecture

	frequency	percent	valid percent
1	12	30.0	31.6
2	17	42.5	44.7
3	7	17.5	18.4
4	2	5.0	5.3
-	2	5.0	-
total	40	100.0	100.0

mean:1.974 std dev:.854

1 = sufficient for all purposes
2 = sufficient for most purposes
3 = occasionally insufficient
4 = often insufficient
- = missing cases

However, the problems were mostly connected with the beginning of the study year, and the main aspect in coping with note-taking, extracting the

main points of the lecture, was rated as highly unproblematic. One interviewee recalls his difficulties in the beginning of the study year:

> ". . . aluksi ei saanut muistiinpanoja oikeastaan ollenkaan, suomen ja englannin sekoitusta ... pari riviä tunnin aikana paperille, koska keskittyi kuuntelemiseen, ei ymmärtänyt alussa ..."
>
> (at first you could hardly make any notes, it was a mixture of Finnish and English . . . a couple of lines on paper in an hour, because you concentrated on listening, you did not understand in the beginning)

On the basis of the results, it can be inferred that academic listening was not a source of major difficulty for the informant group after overcoming the initial problems. As in lectures, listening was not particularly problematic for the informants in seminar discussions, except occasionally when other participants used informal language or spoke in an unfamiliar accent.

It appears that listening in everyday situations was clearly more difficult for the informants than academic listening. Despite the travelling experience of the informants, practising listening skills in interpersonal situations especially outside the campus was regarded as relatively problematic, as seen in Table 3 below.

TABLE 3: Understanding colloquial spoken English (eg. slang words and dialectal expressions

	frequency	percent	valid percent
1	9	22.5	23.1
2	18	45.0	46.2
3	12	30.0	30.8
4	-	-	-
-	1	2.5	-
total	40	100.0	100.0

mean:2.077 std dev:.739

A considerable amount of informants felt that their English language proficiency was insufficient in understanding slang words and dialectal expressions. Local accent also caused misunderstandings, but the informants noticed a clear improvement in understanding spoken everyday English. One interviewee described her experiences:

> "... kielen kanssa oli paljon vaikeampaa kaupungilla tavallisten ihmisten kanssa kuin luennoilla tai seminaareissa ja siellä missä ihmiset puhuu 'sivistynyttä englantia'... alussa esimerkiksi oli bussissa vaikea tajuta kun bussikuski sanoo hinnan, työnnät vaan jotain punnan kolikkoa ja toivot että eiköhän tämä riitä, samoin siivoojat puhui aika raisua englantia ja meni oma aikansa ennen kuin oppi siihen ... tottui kyllä mutta hassua että arkisissa puhetilanteissa oli loppujen lopuksi vaikeampaa kuin

> jossain luennoilla tai ehkä jopa seminaareissakin ... tietysti arkitilanteissa itse pystyi sanomaan ja tuottamaan puhetta suhteellisen vaivattomasti mutta ei välttämättä tajunnutkaan mitä kaupan täti sanoi ..."
>
> (it was much more difficult to use language in town with ordinary people than in lectures or seminars and other places where people speak 'educated English', for instance in the beginning it was difficult to understand when the busdriver says the price, you just hand some one pound coin and hope that it'll be enough, the cleaning ladies also used rather wild english and it took a while before you learned to understand it, you got used to it but it was funny that after all everyday discussions presented more difficulty than some lectures or maybe even seminars, of course you managed to produce speech relatively effortlessly but you didn't necessarily understand what the shop assistant said)

Although the problems connected with listening in everyday situations eased in the course of time, it is likely that they complicate the cultural adjustment to a great extent and may even fortify the amount of culture shock experienced. Therefore, preliminary aural practice in social English and in specific local variants might be valuable to a Finnish exchange student in adjusting to the new environment.

3.2 Speaking

The informants' assessments on their speaking skills before and after the study year in Kent show that this was the language skill where most development occurred during the study year: the number of students who considered their speaking skills excellent quadrupled. (cf. Table 1 above)

It seems that it was often in seminars where the informants' insufficient speaking skills caused problems. Moreover, some culturally determined features of the seminars may have increased their feelings of linguistic inadequacy concerning the successfulness of communication. For example, most of the informants had not been used to such a great amount of oral communication in seminars that the seminars in Kent demanded. Expressing opinions in the course of discussions proved difficult to many informants, which was often due to the fast pace of discussions. One of the informants described her problems:

> "... mietti hirveesti ja yritti tavallaan prosessoida niitä juttuja ja saada sanottua jotain mutta usein kun oli juuri sanomassa niin se asia oli jo mennyt ohi ... siinä ei pysynyt kelkassa ..."
>
> (you thought an awful lot and tried to process the matters in a way and to say something but often when you were about to say something the topic had already changed, you could not follow)

In fact, the questionnaire confirms that the aspect of seminars to cause most constraint on the informants' English language proficiency is the speed of the discussions, as seen in Table 4.

TABLE 4: Expressing own ideas quickly enough in the course of discussion

	frequency	percent	valid percent
1	5	12.5	13.9
2	11	27.5	30.6
3	12	30.0	33.3
4	8	20.0	22.2
-	4	10.0	-
total	40	100.0	100.0

mean:2.639 std dev:.990

Lack of self-confidence resulting either from linguistic deficiencies or from personal characteristics also prevented some informants from making their contributions to the seminar discussion. The comments of some interviewees show that shyness in expressing opinions affected their participation in the beginning when they were faced with unfamiliar expectations on their participation. According to the interviewees, the gradual improvement of language skills increased their self-confidence and allowed them to express their opinions with more complex sentence structures. An interviewee described the change in his participation:

> "... alkoi esittämään mielipiteitä ja ehkä vähitellen rohkaisi itseänsä puhumaan Suomestakin paljon enemmän ..."
>
> (you began to express your opinions and perhaps by and by encouraged yourself to speak a lot more about Finland too).

The problems discussed above become especially clear in a British seminar, where students' own opinions and arguments are highly valued. Therefore, it would be of great use for a Finnish exchange student not only to possess the linguistic abilities that are required in an interactive situation, but also to be aware of the culturally determined expectations of a typical British seminar. Since the students themselves often seemed to value the fluent command of spoken English, practice would certainly have made them feel more secure of themselves in communicating in seminars.

Self-confidence appears to be an important factor when the sufficiency of speaking skills is looked at, because its significance comes out also in everyday speaking situations. The informants felt clearly more confident about speaking in English with other foreign students than with the British students, since they were more aware of the deficiencies in their English language proficiency when confronted with a native speaker. One interviewee said:

> "... alussa helpompi ulkomaalaisten kanssa koska lähtevät samalta tasolta kielen kanssa ja muutenkin ..."
>
> (in the beginning it is easier with the foreigners because they are on the same level with you linguistically and otherwise).

According to the interviewees, the various situations where language was used, in academic as well as other contexts, were reflected in the more fluent use of spoken English. Speaking in discussions evidently developed both in seminars and in everyday situations, and learning to use more informal language, even slang words or colloquialisms, made the informants more confident in interactive situations. An interviewee characterizes her development:

> "... alkoi slangia käyttää ja pystyi sen kanssa operoimaan eli opit miten sanotaan, ei niinkuin koulussa korrektisti opetetaan ..."
>
> (you started to use slang and could operate with it so that you learned how to say things, not the correct way they teach you to say them at school)

Despite the obvious development of speaking skills, oral training in spoken English would certainly have made the cultural adjustment and making contacts with the native speakers easier.

3.3 Writing

As to the overall command of writing, the informants felt that compared to the other language skills they were least competent in this both before and after the year in Kent. However, the fact that the majority regarded their command even in the lowest ranked skill as good (cf. Table 1.) reflects the relatively high level of English language proficiency of the informant group. Many informants felt that writing was an area of considerable development, which can partly be explained by the informants' initial inexperience in writing scientific English.

Both writing essays in English and familiarizing with the British way of structuring the essay were demanding to the informants. One interviewee divided the aspects that affect the essay-writing in two:

> "... sekä kulttuurin sisällä olevat asiat ja ne omat kielelliset epävarmuustekijät ..."
>
> (both cultural matters and your own linguistic uncertainties).

On the basis of the questionnaire, the area in which the informants felt their English language proficiency least sufficient in writing essays was

grammar. The interviewees also expressed their concern over grammatical mistakes that they had made in both essays and examination answers.

On the basis of the rather broad communicative tasks included in the questionnaire, it seemed that the informants had not had other major constraints in writing as far as their ELP was concerned. However, the interview proved especially valuable in revealing more specific information on the writing experiences of the informants and, in particular, on their adjustment to the British way of structuring the essay. The students gradually adopted a new style, and many interviewees described it in detail. One interviewee gave a concise description of the structuring of an essay:

> "... oppi että se pitää tehdä sillä tavalla argumentoimalla, on johdanto ja sitten niitä argumentteja, joissa on se teoria tai joku tälläinen pohjana elikkä niitä oli vaan joku neljä viisi argumenttia ja ne perusteli sitten, miksi asian ajattelee näin ja sitten loppuyhteenveto ..."
>
> (you learned that you have to present arguments, there is an introduction and then those arguments based on some theory or something, in other words, there were only about four or five arguments and then you justified them, why you think about the matter the way you do and then a conclusion)

Although the interviewees' answers cannot be generalized to the whole group, it seems likely that cultural aspects of essay-writing are equally unfamiliar to all the informants, and thus the problems related to them are relevant as to the entire informant group.

The unfamiliar writing style caused problems in understanding the requirements of a specific writing task and in organizing the essay in an appropriate manner. Furthermore, the expectations on the frequent use of metatextual comments came as a surprise to many especially in the beginning. Many interviewees noticed that British academic style contains a greater amount of introductory phrases and expressions of writer's own opinions than the Finnish style that they were used to. One interviewee described her deficient language skills:

> "... puuttui sellaisia sanontoja, ihan tavallaan idiomeja että miten siinä alussa nyt sanotaan ... alussa ne joutui tavallaan kääntämään suoraan suomesta englanniksi ... kyllä tietysti opettaja varmaan ymmärsi mitä tarkoittaa mutta se heti kyllä huomasi että ei tämä ainakaan natiivi ole ..."
>
> (you lacked expressions, in a way idioms, for how to begin, in the beginning you in a way had to translate them directly from Finnish into English, of course, the teacher certainly understood what you meant but surely noticed that you weren't a native speaker)

The reason why these idiomatic phrases were initially missing in their essays was only partly due to stylistic differences; such phrases simply were not part of the students' English language proficiency.

Since the individual processing of information is highly emphasized in the British study system, the ability to utilize source material properly becomes crucial. Many informants felt that their English skills were occasionally insufficient in expressing personal ideas and opinions (Table 5 below), which seemed to be mostly due to relying too heavily on the textbook information. As one informant put it:

> "... alussa referointia aika pitkälle, oma ajattelu ja pohdinta puuttui ja näkyi arvioinneissakin ... "
>
> (in the beginning it was mostly summarizing, own ideas and thoughts were missing and it showed in the gradings).

TABLE 5: Writing down own ideas and opinions on the basis of the textbooks

	frequency	percent	valid percent
1	10	25.0	27.0
2	20	50.0	54.1
3	7	17.5	18.9
4	-	-	-
-	3	7.5	-
total	40	100.0	100.0

mean:1.919 std dev:.682

The problems discussed above indicate that the informants would have benefited from cultural knowledge concerning British essay-writing conventions instead of spending the first essays in acquiring the required knowledge through practice. The areas in which the most difficulties occurred appear to be such aspects of writing that actually can be trained beforehand in order to equip the students with necessary writing skills.

3.4 Reading

The fact that a vast majority of the informants had experience in reading scientific texts in English already before the study year in Kent clearly shows in the overall results concerning the sufficiency of reading skills. Reading seems not to have been a source of major difficulty for the informants, even though the British study system demanded a different approach to reading than the one that Finnish students had been accustomed to. The informants were expected to read a considerable amount of material in a relatively short period of time, and use the material as the basis of forming their own ideas and viewpoints.

Although the informants' reading skills were good already prior to the study year, they felt that their skills had developed to a considerable extent in this area as well. One interviewee gave a detailed description of her development:

> "... nopeus lisääntyi ... ei kiinnittänyt huomiota lauserakenteisiin vaan oppi löytämään sen asian sieltä ... oppi kaikenlaiset pikkusanat, niiden viittaussuhteet ja pikkumerkitykset, oppi nyansseja ... loppuajasta oppi katsomaan että miten se vaikuttaa siihen ja mitkä olivat ne kirjoittamistavat ..."
>
> (reading speed got faster, you didn't pay attention to syntactic structures but learned to extract the point in the text, you learned all kinds of little words, their references and minor meanings, you learned nuances, in the end you learned to see how one thing affects another and what the writing styles were)

The areas of reading that caused the most difficulty for the informants were connected with vocabulary and finding the relevant information. Moreover, the English language proficiency of the informants was occasionally insufficient in reading to time. The problems are clearly interrelated; when the vocabulary became more familiar, it was easier to extract the relevant information in the textbooks in a limited time. One interviewee explained her difficulties:

> "... aika teoreettista ja lauseet oli pitkiä ja monitajuisia ... oppi löytämään sen pointin siitä ... aluksi se oli sellaista kaaosmaisempaa, saattoi lukea eikä välttämättä tajunnut mitä se kirjoittaja sanoo ..."
>
> (it was quite theoretical and there were long and complex sentences, you learned to extract the point, in the beginning it was kind of more chaotic, you might read and not necessarily understand what the writer was saying)

Despite the problems that the students identified in their use of vocabulary, such problems can partly be overcome in the course of the actual studying when the students gain more experience in reading scientific texts in English. Thus, the potential reading practice should focus on reading-writing activities allowing the students to develop their in the individual processing of information.

4 IMPLICATIONS

The overall impression that came across from the informants' experiences in the study is that an academic year abroad is a valuable experience not

only in terms of academic outcomes, but also in terms of language development and cultural enrichment. Although some clear problem areas emerged as to the sufficiency of language skills, most of the students seem to have managed to cope with their language skills. Nevertheless, the limitations of a deficient language proficiency can become a further strain in a culturally unfamiliar situation, and prevent a student from using his or her talents to the utmost degree.

As many of the informants noticed during their study year in Kent, the language difficulties discussed earlier can partly be overcome through practice in real-life situations. It is only natural that spending a longer period in a foreign environment increases the abilities to communicate in a second language. However, the development of language skills often takes place gradually, and even at the initial stage a student has to be able to cope with the language in order to progress in his or her studies. The possibility of becoming a competent essay-writer in the near future does not give much consolation to a student struggling with initial problems of grammar or structuring the essay.

In order to make the most of a study year abroad, it would be useful for most of the Finnish undergraduates to obtain preliminary language training and guidance in cultural conventions concerning the problematic aspects of academic study. It is clear that the problems identified in the present study could not all have been overcome simply by providing the students with preliminary language training, but knowledge of culturally unfamiliar expectations and conventions of the British study system should be regarded as equally important. A possible solution might be to design authentic-like study situations, which would combine language training and familiarization with cultural conventions of a specific setting to prepare the students to meet the expectations of their academic year abroad. This would require motivating students who have not yet had any experience of studying in Britain, for instance, to engage in a seminar discussion, and actually contribute with their own ideas and opinions. The future participants of exchange programmes could also be informed of the experiences of the former Finnish exchange students to make them aware of what a study year at a British university may entail.

On the basis of the informants' own comments, it seems that their view on what foreign language proficiency entails is often rather narrow. They do not appear to give enough value to their overall communicative success in the use of language skills in various situations. This is especially clearly seen in overemphasizing problems with vocabulary or grammar in, for instance, essay writing and reading. Presumably the informants' concern with the correct use of language forms is partly due to the emphasis on grammatical correctness of language in foreign language teaching in Finland. It could be argued that the informants' ratings concerning the sufficiency of their English language proficiency

are influenced by this view and by the high expectations that at least some of them seem to have set on the development of their English language proficiency in such a way that the ratings may show greater difficulty than actually occurred.

Some limitations of the study reported above are due to the research approach chosen, self-assessment, since it is clear that informants' assessments on their language proficiency are always influenced by their subjective views and values. For instance, a language performance test could have given more reliable information on the informants' English language skills in certain respects. Nevertheless, it is the students' subjective views that count when they face problems in real-life situations; if you feel that your language skills are not sufficient in a certain communicative context, ie. communication is not successful according to your own standards, it is irrelevant how proficient you are according to a language test results.

The relatively small number of informants also has to be borne in mind when the results are looked at. Furthermore, although the questionnaire was designed specifically for the purposes of the study, it was difficult to formulate some of the questions so that they would involve matters related solely to English language proficiency. The use of two research methods proved valuable for instance in determining the actual role of language proficiency in the informants' difficulties, and the interview can be considered to have served its original purpose well: it did give additional and often more profound information on the subject. In general, it can be said that the main purpose of the study was achieved, and it is likely that the results could be used for a practical purpose: to help to specify the course content of a potential preliminary language course for the future participants. However, the actual syllabus design would require further research on determining the suitable content of the course, eg. syllabus items, teaching methods, and materials.

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A study year abroad: Exchange students' assessments of their English language proficiency

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This paper is a report on the results of a survey carried out among the Jyväskylä University students who had spent a study year at the University of Kent during the academic years 1989-90, 1990-91, and 1991-92. In their survey the writers used both questionnaires and interviews, in which the students were asked to assess the sufficiency of their language skills in various academic situations. Thus the study gives first-hand information of the students' own feelings about their linguistic problems and the development of their language skills during the year abroad. On the whole, the informants' comments show that they do not give enough value to their overall communicative success but tend to overemphasize problems with vocabulary and grammar.

Key words: language proficiency, self-assessment, exchange students

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FINNISH EXCHANGE STUDENTS IN EDINBURGH
How Do They Cope? How Could They Cope Better?

Joan Nordlund
Nanette Lindeberg
Pearl Lönnfors

1 INTRODUCTION

A student exchange scheme between the Universities of Helsinki and Edinburgh, Scotland began in Autumn, 1989. Up to twenty students from various faculties at Helsinki spend up to one academic year (three terms) in Edinburgh.

We are lecturers teaching English oral skills at Helsinki University Language Centre. We were interested in finding out how the exchange students cope with their year in Edinburgh. In particular, we wanted to know if the problems they might encounter had anything to do with language, and if so we wanted to develop teaching modules to help students going to Edinburgh to get the most from their year there. We also wished to encourage students who were not so confident in English to apply for the scheme, knowing they could get some linguistic help.

We decided to carry out a language needs analysis by consulting students who had been to Edinburgh, those currently there, those about to go and relevant teachers at Edinburgh. We planned to use the results

of the analysis to develop teaching modules which could be offered on a voluntary basis to students accepted for the exchange scheme. We also assumed that such modules could be adapted for students on other exchange schemes.

The purpose of this report is to describe the needs analysis and the resulting preparatory course. The analysis revealed that students cope well in Edinburgh, but that they need help with academic writing and academic and informal discussion in particular. The preparatory course concentrated on these areas. We had gathered a wealth of information specific to Edinburgh and its university culture, which we used in the course too.

Post-course evaluations and discussions with some of the students after their year abroad have convinced us that this kind of orientation training, based on careful needs analysis, helps to eliminate some langauge and culture bumps, and thus is useful in getting students started in their exchange year.

2 THE PROCESS

The needs analysis included questionnaires, interviews, diagnostic testing and a pilot preparatory course.

In 1987, a needs analysis was carried out by questionnaire, involving two of the current team, for the Faculty of Law at Helsinki University (Bullivant et al, 1987). The same questionnaire format successfully formed the basis of an analysis of English language needs at the Theatre Academy of Finland (Nordlund, 1988). We decided to use it for our analysis too, because it was flexible and had worked well. The idea was to find out how people cope with written and spoken English in a variety of situations, and at different levels of formality. We excluded situations mentioned on the original questionnaire which would not be relevant, such as translating to and from English, negotiating, participating in conferences and writing reports. We added writing essays and longer papers, participating in tutorial discussions and discussing with lecturers, since we thought exchange students would be involved in these activities.

The subjects of the study were past, current and future students on the Edinburgh exchange scheme and their teachers at Edinburgh. The students came from a wide variety of disciplines, including law, social and natural sciences, the arts, economics, theology and musicology.

2.1 The initial study (1990/91)

Questionnaires were sent to (1) the 19 students who were at Edinburgh for the 1989/90 academic year, (2) the 20 who were currently there, (3) Edinburgh teaching staff who came into contact with Finnish students and (4) the 20 people who had been accepted on the scheme for the 1991/92 academic year.

All students were asked to indicate their faculty, the courses they had taken/were taking/planned to take at Edinburgh, and why they had decided to go there.

Students previously at Edinburgh were asked what cultural, social and linguistic problems they had experienced, and what help they would have liked before they left. They were also asked to assess their own abilities in reading, writing, listening and speaking when they arrived in Edinburgh and when they left. They were asked how often they had needed and how well they had coped with English in the specified situations.

Students at Edinburgh were asked what cultural, social and linguistic problems they were having and what help they would have liked before they left. They were also asked to assess their own abilities in the four language skills when they arrived and "now" (February, 1991). They were asked how often they needed and how well they coped with English in the specified situations.

Teachers were asked in what contexts they had dealt with Finnish students and how the students had coped, for example, with formal and informal conversation, working in small groups, formal and informal writing. They were then asked their opinion about how often Finnish students needed English in the specified situations.

Students going to Edinburgh were asked what kind of help they would like before leaving. They were also asked to assess their own abilities in the four skills. They were asked how well they coped with English in the specified situations.

The questionnaires were piloted among teachers with experience of foreign students and among the few students from Edinburgh University who were spending a year at Helsinki (see Lindeberg et al, 1992 for the final versions).

The second part of the needs analysis consisted of interviews. These were conducted in Edinburgh in May, 1991 with the Finnish exchange students there and with some of the staff who taught them and/or previous exchange students. Teachers were questioned about the types of instruction the Finnish students received, how they were assessed and how they performed linguistically. Students were asked how well they had coped during the year, and to try to pin-point any difficulties which might have been caused by deficiency in language knowledge. The

original intention was to interview former exchange students back in Helsinki too, but the response to the questionnaire was so poor that it was not considered worthwhile.

A diagnostic language test was given to the 1991/92 students in May, 1991. The test included social English, listening comprehension, summary and essay writing and an oral interview.

Finally, a pilot preparatory course was given in September, 1991 for the 1991/92 Edinburgh exchange students. It was held over four days at the Helsinki University Language Centre and included modules on academic writing, culture and oral skills.

2.2 The follow-up study (1991/92)

The purpose of the follow-up study was to gather more information about the needs of Finnish exchange students in Edinburgh, and to assess the effectiveness of the pilot preparatory course.

For the sake of consistency, we decided to use the same methods as in the initial study, where appropriate. We thought it was not necessary to send self-analysis questionnaires to the students in Edinburgh because we had had so much contact with them in the pilot course. Therefore, the only questionnaires sent were to Edinburgh teaching staff who came into contact with Finnish students (Lindeberg et al, 1992, Appendix I, Questionnaire III).

Interviews were conducted in Edinburgh in April, 1992 with the Finnish exchange students there and with some of the staff who taught them. The teacher interviews followed the same format as in the initial study and the student interviews focussed on oral skills and listening comprehension, written skills and generally coping.

3 RESULTS

The responses to the questionnaires and the information collected from the interviews constituted the main results of the needs analysis. The questionnaire response from the teachers and the interviews with them in the initial study were very valuable, while very little new information emerged during the follow-up. On the other hand, the student interviews carried out in Edinburgh for the follow-up study proved more useful than those held the previous year. The results from the initial and follow-up studies were consistent.

3.1 Questionnaires

In the initial study the response from former exchange students was so poor that it was not considered worthwhile analysing the few questionnaires that were returned.

Thirteen of the twenty students at Edinburgh (1990/91; initial study) returned their questionnaires.

The cultural, social and linguistic problems mentioned by students included the Scottish accent, social conversation and academic writing. The sheer volume of work was mentioned by one, and various problems with the language by three. Two respondents indicated that they had not experienced any such difficulties.

Reading and listening abilities had improved during the year to an almost universal **95 %** level. Spoken English also improved substantially, and no one felt they were coping **less than well**. There was more variation in levels of written English although, again, a positive shift was recorded. Most people coped **well** or **adequately** when they arrived, and felt they were coping **fully** or **well** when they returned their questionnaires in February.

Formal and longer report writing, and participation in meetings and conferences were generally not perceived as frequent needs. Most of the other situations, such as reading newspapers, journals and reports, writing essays and formal and informal discussion, occurred **often** or **sometimes**. Reading and following spoken English were overwhelmingly coped with **very well** or **well**, as was managing with simple conversational English. Few people felt totally confident with their ability to write more extensively, participate in tutorial and seminar discussions, give oral presentations or to discuss their subject with their lecturers and colleagues, although most felt they coped **well**. A few felt they did **not** cope **well** with writing essays, telephoning and even following seminar and tutorial discussions.

Eighteen of the twenty students going to Edinburgh in 1991/92 took the diagnostic test and returned their questionnaires. Most of them felt confident about their reading skills, and less confident with listening. Similarly, most thought they could speak at least adequately, but less than half were satisfied with their skills in writing.

The situations with which half of the respondents or more felt able to cope **very well** were reading magazines or newspapers, following radio and TV programmes and having short conversations. Fifty per cent or more felt they could **not** cope **well** with writing formal letters, writing essays, writing longer papers, participating in seminar and tutorial discussions, participating in meetings and conferences and giving oral presentations and papers.

Twenty-nine of the 60 teachers in the initial study, and 28 of 60 in the follow-up, who were sent the questionnaire completed and returned it. It was accepted that some teachers were probably not available, and some said that in fact they had not taught any of the Finnish exchange students. Most of the teachers had limited exposure to the Finnish students, many having taught only one or two, since the students were spread out over many faculties and the choice of courses was very wide.

The questionnaires gave very similar information both years. The most frequent type of contact was in lectures and tutorials, followed by written work and social. About one third of the teachers reported examination contact. Most of them indicated that the students coped **well** linguistically, although informal conversation, working in small groups, giving papers, tutorial discussion and informal writing seemed to cause some problems. Some lack of concentration, especially in longer lectures, was also mentioned.

Many teachers could not say how often the students would need English in the situations described on the second page of the questionnaire. Where an opinion was expressed, the least frequently-occurring situations were filling in forms and official papers, following meetings and conferences, reading aloud, participating in meetings and conferences and giving papers.

3.2 Interviews with teachers

The teacher interviews in the initial study were very informative. Little new information was added during the follow-up study. The following account applies to both.

Interviews of half an hour each were held with 15 teachers who had had contact with Finnish exchange students. The teachers pointed out that their experience was at most of three students, and usually only one. Nevertheless, the comments were illuminating.

All of the teachers interviewed were very positive about the Finnish students and wished more of them would join their courses. They found them conscientious, and were impressed with their overall language abilities.

3.2.1 Teaching

According to the teachers we spoke to,

> The purpose of the teaching is to train students to examine and analyse. They are encouraged to debate, argue, explore and challenge. Written work should display the student's own style and ideas.

The types of teaching provided include lectures, seminars, tutorials and workshops. Lectures usually last fifty minutes. Seminars are usually for third- and fourth-year students and feature student presentations and discussions. There is roughly one teacher to ten students. Tutorial sessions are given in all years for some subjects, and in the third and fourth years for others. Some tutorial topics are synchronized with lecture topics. Students often give presentations but not always. The group size is seven or eight. In tutorials, students are expected to work either alone or with a partner to present a topic, discuss articles and various issues, comment on, argue for and against and challenge the views expressed by group members, and present their own views. Workshops are given in a few subjects and are normally combined with lectures.

3.2.2 Assessment

In most subjects, Finnish students are not required by Helsinki University to take a written examination at Edinburgh. They are assessed by means of other written work during and/or at the end of the courses. Students joining the third year of an honours course would not have experienced degree examinations anyway.

Where examinations are taken, they last from one to three hours. Most course requirements include the writing of one to four essays. Shorter essays are of 1,500-2,000 words, and longer ones up to 6,000 words. Other forms of assessment include oral presentations, take-home examinations, end-of-term essays and field study work, depending on the department. The Classics Department gave a slide test lasting one hour.

Students need to display thorough knowledge of the material to achieve a pass. Higher marks are given for deeper analysis and application.

3.2.3 Performance

In general, Finnish students cope quite well with their written work, and they perform very well in comparison with other students who are not native speakers of English. Grammar, spelling and general expression are very good, although there are problems with articles. They seem competent in identifying the central issue and developing someone else's argument. They do, however, experience difficulties writing to time (required in most courses). It was also felt that some students may be prevented from expressing complex ideas, or even from writing what they wish to, because of language and, in particular, a lack of idiomatic expressions. Some teachers felt that Finnish students are too dependent on the literature, and do not use it to develop their own ideas and arguments. It was also felt that some students probably have problems maintaining their concentration level during longer sessions.

Finnish students seem to cope less well with oral contributions in class. They answer well when asked directly, but seem to have problems initiating, working in small groups and contributing in tutorials. They are sometimes hesitant, react slowly and are reluctant to argue and criticize. Some have problems with the Scottish accent and, again, some seem to find it difficult to maintain concentration during longer sessions.

What was particularly interesting was the feedback about the student with the lowest score on the diagnostic test, and whose level of English we suspected might not be adequate based on her performance during the course. She had been very energetic in Edinburgh, and her motivation had compensated for her linguistic shortcomings. She succeeded well.

3.3 Interviews with students

Only a few students came to the informal session we had organized for the initial study. We understood that there were other activities on that day. The opinion of one of the students that we were there "to check up on them" may also have had some bearing on the poor turnout.

In the follow-up study, however, these interviews were the most valuable part of the exercise and they are reported in some detail below. They were carried out on a one-to-one basis, in a relaxed atmosphere. We knew most of the students quite well already, after the pilot preparatory course, and they knew why we were there, and why we were interviewing them. The interviews were semi-structured and focussed on oral skills and listening comprehension, writing skills and generally coping with life in Edinburgh.

The types of teaching experienced included lectures, tutorials, seminars, group work and field trips.

3.3.1 Oral skills and listening comprehension

Lectures were generally followed quite well, particularly after the first few weeks, when the accent became more familiar. There were some problems with terminology, and some students found it very difficult taking notes and listening at the same time.

Not all students had tutorials as part of their courses. The reaction to them was not totally positive, although some said there was a good atmosphere. The rationale of the tutorial system was questioned, and some were regarded as superficial. Many students found it difficult to participate in the discussion for a variety of reasons. These included not feeling comfortable interrupting, not being able to respond quickly enough in turn-taking, having nothing to say, finding the terminology

difficult and being in too large a group. Tutorial presentations were found difficult at first, and some people found they did too much preparation, and their presentation suffered. However, some students said that the pilot preparatory course had given them a valuable insight into this aspect of their work.

One student was involved in seminar presentation, and coped well. Another told us that they had to listen to a lecture with 150 other students, then break into small groups for discussion and report back to the entire group; the reporting back was experienced as daunting. Others were involved in various group projects.

All the students except one were expected to give oral presentations. One person avoided the task. One person "read it like everyone else", and one spent so much time writing it that she had no time to practice it. Students felt they coped, eventually.

In general, problems with oral skills included the Scottish accent (of lecturers but more of fellow Scottish students), struggling with subject matter, speaking turns and social conversation.

3.3.2 Writing skills

The amount and type of written work required varied widely from department to department. Most students were expected to do more than they would in Helsinki. Many students complained about the amount of time spent on written work. Gaps in vocabulary and problems with idiomatic expressions were noticed. However, performance seemed to improve as the year went on. Some students had found the pilot preparatory course very valuable for their writing tasks. The input and reference material had been particularly useful throughout the year.

It was pointed out that, in Finland, it is important to show a knowledge of the facts, whereas in Edinburgh it is essential to make the arguments flow.

Students seemed to achieve very good results in their written work, despite their difficulties. Many gained exemption from course examinations because of their good results during the term. They were divided in their opinion about whether they would have achieved better results if they had written in their own language. For example, computer science terminology is almost exclusively in English, even in Finland, and writing in English is more natural. Some students had major terminology problems.

In general, problems in coping with the written work included working to time, structuring the work, and persistent worries about articles, prepositions and idiomatic usage. It was felt that improvements in fluency, if not in accuracy, were achieved. Two people actively enjoyed the writing.

3.3.3 Coping in Edinburgh

All of the students interviewed felt positive about their year in Edinburgh. Some had had more problems than others, especially with organizing their study programme and living arrangements. Likewise, some people were more satisfied with their courses, and some had taken more advantage of life outside the classroom.

The pilot preparatory course was found useful. It was considered a good way to start to use English as a language of instruction and discussion. The writing practice and the video presentations and tutorial sessions were particularly praised. It was felt that it was impossible to place too much emphasis on discussion and arguing. The opportunity to meet and get to know the other exchange students was appreciated.

All the students who talked to us during both phases of the project felt very positive about their Edinburgh experiences. They coped well with lectures, although the informality was a culture shock. They were not always prepared for the tutorial set-up, and had problems coping with native speakers' speed of delivery and thought, and with some accents. They felt reluctant to argue and criticize, and this was a major cultural problem with which some had not yet come to terms. The informal atmosphere did help, however.

4 MEETING THE NEEDS

The reason for carrying out the needs analysis project was to develop suitable course modules in order to prepare students for academic life in Edinburgh. A pilot course was given in September 1991, and the first course proper in September 1992.

4.1 The pilot course

This was held at Helsinki University Language Centre in early September, 1992. It ran intensively from Monday to Saturday lunchtime, and the weekday sessions were held during the afternoons and evenings to accommodate students who were working. The only cost to the students was for photocopied materials.

We based the course on the results of the initial needs analysis study. There were three modules, which overlapped to some extent. These were academic writing, culture and oral skills.

The academic writing module covered writing structure and content. Students wrote outlines, summaries, abstracts and an essay. They were encouraged to argue for and against, to express varying degrees of certainty and uncertainty, and to defend their point of view.

The aim of the culture module was to make students aware of some aspects of British and Scottish culture. This included various aspects of university life, such as social contacts with students and staff, and tutorial discussion.

The oral skills module included discussion and oral presentation, in more and less formal settings. Everyone gave a five-minute presentation about one aspect of Scottish culture, which they had researched before the course.

There was a tutorial session on the Saturday morning. We chose the theme "The impact of computer technology within your field", which we thought was relevant to all the participants, who were with various faculties. This was followed up by an essay, in which they were expected to review and critically analyze the various tutorial presentations they had heard. We made ourselves available for individual consultation.

A reception, hosted by the British Council on the Monday following the course, gave the participants the opportunity to meet and chat to former exchange students, as well as to some students in Finland from Edinburgh.

We sent out some pre-course materials, and the students were expected to prepare their five-minute presentation and their tutorial topic in advance. The package included instructions for these tasks, input and exercises for the writing tasks and some reference materials.

We made an effort to create a relaxed and productive atmosphere. A room was set aside for use as a library, and dictionaries and other reference materials were available.

The student evaluations of the course clearly showed that they had found it very useful. The writing input and practice, the opportunity to talk, the relaxed atmosphere, the tutorial session and the opportunity to get to know the other Edinburgh exchange students were perceived as positive. On the negative side, some people thought too much work was involved, and the long sessions were criticized.

The three of us also had an evaluation session. We had all been equally involved in the preparations but, during the course iteself, had split our responsibilities. This worked on the whole, but there were occasions when we felt we all should have been present. We also had the feeling that we tried to cover too much in the writing sessions. The follow-up essays did not meet our expectations, and generally lacked critical appraisal. However, we were confident that the course had worked, but that it would have been even better if it had been residential and away from Helsinki. We realized that the students were not always concentrating on the course because they were distracted by their

domestic and work responsibilities. To some extent, this also applied to us.

4.2 The preparatory course

The results of the needs analysis and follow-up studies, and of the diagnostic tests, and our and the students' evaluations of the pilot course, were all considered when we planned the preparatory course for 1992.

We decided to keep the same basic structure as in the pilot course, but to give more time for individual consultation and feedback to students. We assumed that they would be able to devote more time to tasks set during the course. The tutorial theme remained the same. We added a social evening on the Thursday, and the final reception was hosted this time by the British Embassy.

The students' evaluations of the course were very positive. They particularly mentioned the useful input, the chance to get to know the other students, the positive atmosphere, the opportunity to work with all three teachers, and to work in different groups, and the tutorial session. It was proclaimed "hard work but worth it".

We were also happy with the outcome. The course was residential, which gave it an obvious advantage over the previous year's arrangements. It was noticeable that a strong bonding between the students had taken place. We felt that there was enough time to give individual feedback to students on their oral and written presentations. The lack of external commitments benefitted us all. However, once again, the final essay was not totally successful, although some students did very well. Not all of them completed it, and there was still too much straightforward reporting and too little critical appraisal. This is clearly an area for improvement.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The major conclusion of the entire needs analysis project was that, on the whole, Finnish students cope well in English during their year abroad, and they enjoy the experience. There are certain clear areas for improvement, however, particularly in academic writing and seminar discussion.

Students should be made aware of university conventions, especially in tutorials, the amount of writing required and the importance

of speed and analytical comment. Summary writing also emerged as a specific need. In general, future students should be prepared for a heavy work load!

It is clear that linguistic competence is not the only criterion for a successful exchange year. Some of the linguistically weaker students not only coped, but achieved real academic success. They said the preparatory course had given them confidence and motivation. The need for a preparatory course has been confirmed, we believe.

There is no reason why such courses should be confined to Edinburgh exchange students, or even to those going to study in British institutions; there are core elements that are universally applicable. However, the research carried out on-site to find out what is expected of students, and what cultural problems they might face, proved invaluable. We would therefore recommend that teachers embarking upon preparatory courses establish contacts with the receiving institutions first.

It is obvious to us that the need to prepare students for exchange trips abroad is established, and will continue to grow. The process of internationalization in general in Finland, and the ERASMUS and other exchange programmes in particular, only increase this need. Students inevitably require time to adjust to new surroundings wherever they go, but we are convinced that this period can be shortened if appropriate preparatory training is offered. This could be crucial to the successful outcome of shorter exchange visits.

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Finnish exchange students in Edinburgh - How do they cope? How could they cope better?

Joan Nordlund - Nanette Lindeberg - Pearl Lönnfors

This paper describes the language needs of Finnish exchange students at Edinburgh University. The main objective is to utilize a needs analysis approach in course planning. The needs analysis described identified two major language problem areas for Finnish exchange students: speaking in seminars and writing essays. These skill areas, together with plenty of cultural information, were incorporated in a preparatory course for exchange students, given before they began their year in Edinburgh. The students' feedback on the usefulness and appropriacy of the course was very positive. This encourages the adoption of this course type for regular use, and its adaptation for other receiving institutions and types of exchange student.

Key words: needs analysis, student exchange, course planning, English language teaching

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