

# ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA IN THE WORKPLACE: ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL?

In search for a deeper understanding of Finnish speakers of ELF

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Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää, englantia työssään virallisena kielenä käyttävien suomalaisten kielellistä identiteettiä ja asenteita lingua franca -englantiin (ELF). Tutkimukseni taustalla on halu ymmärtää, pitäisikö yhä enemmän kiinnostusta herättäneen ELF näkemyksen heijastua jatkossa enemmän myös aikuisten kielikoulutuksessa. Lähteinä olen käyttänyt pääasiassa viimeaikaisia ELF tutkimuksia. Tämä työ luo yleiskatsauksen ELF tutkimukseen ja lisää osaltaan tietoutta lingua franca -englantia yritysmaailmassa käyttävien asenteista, tavoitteista, oppimisesta ja erilaisista normeista.

Tutkimusaineistona on neljä puolistrukturoitua teemahaastattelua. Haastateltavat työskentelevät erityyppisissä tehtävissä globaalisti toimivassa suomalaisessa yrityksessä ja käyttävät työkielenään englantia. Haastattelut nauhoitettiin, litteroitiin ja analysoitiin esille tulevien teemojen mukaisesti.

Tutkielman tulokset osoittavat, että lingua franca -englanti (ELF) käsitteenä on vielä melko vieras haastateltavien keskuudessa. Vaikka he työskentelevät lingua franca -englannin keskellä, he kokivat, ettei englannin kielen eri varieteetteja voi niputtaa yhden nimikkeen alle, vaan että ne näyttäytyvät heille erilaisina, yleensä kansallisina muotoina. Niinpä heille ei ole myöskään muodostunut varsinaista ELF puhujan identiteettiä, eivätkä he ole vielä valmiita ajattelemaan ELF:iä tavoitteena tai mallina. Oman englannin taitonsa he kokivat useimmiten riittävänä monikulttuurisessa työympäristössään, vaikka toiveena onkin usein vielä ilmaisuvoimaisempi kielitaito. Lingua franca englannin monimuotoisuus aiheuttaa joskus ongelmia ja ärtymystäkin, mutta yksilöiden kielitaitoa sinänsä ei yleensä oteta työssä puheeksi. Vaikka he työssä ollessaan ovatkin lähinnä englannin kielen käyttäjiä, on heillä myös kielen oppijan rooli. Englannin/ELF:n oppiminen jatkuu, vaikka se ei olekaan samanlaista kuin kouluoppiminen vaan työssä tapahtuvaa interaktiivista oppimista.

Asiasanat: English as a lingua franca, ELF, language attitudes, language identity

## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>BELF</b>	Business English Lingua Franca
<b>BES</b>	Bilingual English Speaker
<b>CC</b>	Communicative Competence
<b>CLL</b>	Communicative Language Learning
<b>CEF</b>	Common European Framework of Reference of Languages
<b>colinguals</b>	people who speak a particular language with each other (Schell)
<b>CoP</b>	Community of Practice
<b>EFL</b>	English as a Foreign Language
<b>ELF</b>	English as a Lingua Franca
<b>ELFA</b>	Corpus of English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings
<b>ELFE</b>	English as a Lingua Franca in Europe
<b>EIAL</b>	English as an International Auxiliary Language (Smith)
<b>EIL</b>	English as an International Language (Smith)
<b>EicL</b>	English as an Intercultural Language (Sifakis)
<b>EMT</b>	English as a Mother Tongue
<b>ENL</b>	English as a Native Language
<b>ESL</b>	English as a Second Language
<b>Euro-English</b>	English as it is spoken in Europe, especially in EU (Modiano)
<b>Globish</b>	a term for reduced International English (Nerrière)
<b>IBCC</b>	Intercultural Business Communication Competence
<b>ICC</b>	Intercultural Communicative Competence
<b>IE</b>	International English (Quirk)
<b>LFC</b>	Lingua Franca Core
<b>LFE</b>	Lingua Franca English
<b>L1</b>	First language
<b>L2</b>	Second language
<b>MES</b>	Monolingual English Speaker (Jenkins)
<b>New English</b>	Nativized L2 English
<b>NNS</b>	Non-native speaker
<b>NNSE</b>	Non-native speaker of English

<b>NS</b>	Native speaker
<b>NSE</b>	Native speaker of English
<b>NBES</b>	Non-Bilingual English Speaker (Jenkins)
<b>SUE</b>	Successful User of English
<b>VOICE</b>	Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English
<b>WSSE</b>	World Standard Spoken English (Crystal)

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Globalization affects language use and language teaching in diverse ways. This study sets out to provide some research-based evidence on the attitudes of people working in companies with English as their official corporate language. The study approaches this theme through the concept of English as a lingua franca (henceforth, ELF) and with a focus on business discourses in a globally functioning IT company setting. This topic fascinates me as many companies today have English as their official corporate language and also as I as a teacher would like to know whether there is a need for new language models in the globalized workplace.

Today, English is often regarded as a core skill, in the same way ICT skills are (Graddol 1997). Researchers have recently argued that, because of the increased international use of English, we need to move beyond native-speaker-centred English language teaching (e.g. Seidlhofer 2004). It seems, however, that quite a few learners themselves express a wish to learn to speak English like the native speakers do. On the other hand, there is also a group of learners who claim they speak and always will speak a local variety of English. Statistical analysis reveals that students' attitudes fall into three main groups or clusters—the US friendly cluster, the pro-British cluster and the lingua franca cluster (Erling 2006: 9) My students, those striving to improve their English, often mention that they are surprised at how many different ways there are to speak English, and how difficult it can be to understand all these varieties. Nevertheless, these very same people are extremely competent language users and are expected to get by professionally in multicultural work groups. They face a big challenge.

Building on previous research on ELF, this study seeks to understand how the actual ELF users experience English at the workplace, in relation to their own and others' skills. My main interest is their English speaker identity and their developing conceptions as English speakers as well as their attitudes

towards ELF in corporate setting in general and as a potential learning goal. To study this, and because ELF is still a quite controversial subject, I also need to touch on concepts like native speakerism, intercultural communication, and learner/user identities, to name a few. I also intend to discuss what the implications of ELF are on language teaching and learning. Moreover, I wish to be able to apply the results in corporate language training and raise general awareness about ELF in real life.

Predominance of English is well documented (e.g. Brutt-Griffler 2002, Crystal 1997, Graddol 2006, Jenkins 2003, and Widdowson) In today's world, global business communications mostly take place in English. But when we say English, we do not any more mean only one English, but different variations of it. The British Prime Minister Gordon Brown (2008) once said: "English does not make us all the same - nor should it, for we honour who we distinctively are. But it makes it possible for us to speak to each other and understand each other. And so it is a powerful force, not just for economics, business, and trade, but for mutual respect and progress". This forms the setting for my study.

This is a qualitative sociolinguistic study and the data consists of four individual semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 1) with employees of a globally functioning Finnish corporation (henceforth referred to as CompanyA). Qualitative approach and the small sample of participants enable me to concentrate on personal feelings and experiences. This is also a language attitude study. Language attitudes are the feelings people have about their own language or the languages of others (Crystal 1992).

This study differs from previous studies in that its focus is on studying the language attitudes and identities of the actual ELF users in the workplace, through the framework of ELF. The role of the English language in international corporate communication is often taken for granted. I seek answers to how the users really perceive their own English and the ELF world they work in. Most importantly, I think a lot of L2 learning takes place



outside the classroom, in work contexts, and thus working life perspective is needed.

Next, I'm going to discuss some issues in global English and ELF, including some notions that might be seen as opposed to the ELF ideology. This is followed by introducing the data and the results of my study. As I find it important to discuss how ELF affects language instruction, pedagogical implications for teaching ELF are considered in the next section of the study. These are based on former studies and partly on what my own study showed to be of importance. The final sections are devoted to discussion and concluding words.

## 2 ISSUES IN GLOBAL ENGLISH AND ELF

### 2.1 English - a global language

A language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country. (Crystal 2003)

In this chapter, the spread of English as a global language, ELF, and ELF related (or opposed) issues are discussed. This overview will serve as background and setting the scene for the issues in the empirical part of my study.

In 1999 Graddol (1999: 57) predicted that in the future English will be a language used mainly in multilingual contexts as a second language and for communication between non-native speakers. This prediction seems to have come true now, as English is used most often as a contact language by speakers of other languages in various contexts. Also, our society is becoming a 24-hour society that increasingly challenges its members on all levels. Information density grows and people need tools to be able to communicate and interact faster and faster. At the same time they need to learn to accommodate to other cultures. Global English enables us to communicate freely with each other and thus satisfies our needs (Ibrahim 2005). There have been attempts to create a common language from scratch, like in the case of Esperanto, but as McArthur (2003: 55) says, *lingua franca* "arises out of historical circumstance". This is why it cannot be achieved by simplifying a given world language. As an example McArthur mentions the fate of Basic English, created by Ogden and Richards between the 1920s and 1940s. Global English, however, is also said to be experiencing a simplification of its grammar and phonetics (Ibrahim 2005).

How do people react to the predominance of a certain language? MacArthur (2003:55) hits the nail on the head: "Pragmatism tends to win the day." We can have varying attitudes to these languages, everything from hate to love,

but our real reasons for using or not using a language are pragmatic. The main question is, he (ibid.) says: "Will knowing and using this language make my life easier and/or richer? (in any sense of the word *rich*)". Moreover, he claims that cultural interest and linguistic curiosity are just minority pursuits. If we think of English in the world now, we can see that, for quite a few people, it has made their lives better. Of course, any common vehicular language would have had the same effect.

English increasingly suffices to get by almost everywhere. Both the incentive and opportunity to learn English will increase because of this. In a business setting people take more courses even if their existing skills suffice. Better job opportunities might appear. Consequently, and unfortunately, the incentive and opportunity to learn other languages might simultaneously decrease. English will become more and more a globally public language.

Learning English is understood as a prerequisite of professional success also in Finland. But which English do we mean here? Before, it was natural to think that the model to be learned was British or American English. English today has become a no-man's reserve. The irresistible spread of English as a medium of universal transaction is unprecedented and part of the globalization process. It has been widely acknowledged that L2 English speakers (speakers whose mother tongue is not English) are in the majority (e.g., Jenkins 2002, Seidlhofer 2004). In fact it has been claimed that at least 80 per cent of all communication in English happens between non-native English speakers. This, however, is just an estimate (see Pienemann 1984) without any exact figures. Nevertheless, it is widely acknowledged that non-native speakers of English outnumber native speakers. A transformationalist perspective, which sees the current phase as a period of significant social, political and cultural transformations, is regarded as most relevant to describe the present discussion about ELF and global English in general (Dewey 2007:332).

McArthur (2003) says that if the world language had not been English then another language would have taken on the job, as we need such a language. This alternative language would also have been of European origin and

would thus have offered Europe the same benefits as English. The present development seems like a self-evident process, but it has been claimed that German really could be **the** lingua franca of the world today if WWII had ended differently. (Anchimbe 2006: 4) The situation now would be totally different if European languages had not been so predominant in recent centuries; we might have to accept markedly different writing systems in the same way some parts of the world must do now. English has a long history from the days it began to spread worldwide in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. McArthur stresses the fact that war, politics and economics play a big role linguistically. He sees 1945 as an important year for the rise of the English language, as Britain was still prominent and America was more potent than ever. German lost the linguistic battle and the Japanese went back to Japan. In the 1990's the collapse of the Soviet Union made it clear that Russian was not going to be the lingua franca of the world. (McArthur 2003: 54). However, English is not the largest language in the world, as Chinese gets that honour. But English has a world role in media, sciences, education, business, travel and transport. McArthur says it would be easier to speak about an 'English language complex' than about English, because of all the kinds of Englishes present in today's world (p. 56) Also, he questions the traditional categories (native users, second-language users and foreign language users), as these classic divisions are becoming harder to maintain in the present situation. He says a learning process that began in childhood for many so called foreign language users has led to the fact that they use the language better than many native or SL users now (p. 57). It is especially hard to make these distinctions among highly educated and experienced users of English who use the language regularly and routinely.

Graddol (2006) says that the key drivers of change in English as a global language were demographic, economic, technological and long-term trends in society. Globalization brings with it outsourcing of services. Also, the relationship between English and globalisation is twofold: economic globalisation encouraged the spread of English but the spread of English also

encouraged globalisation. Dollerup (1996:26) argues that the present hegemony of English in Europe is primarily due to the entertainment industry, less so to war, technology or science. To give an example, 80% of the films shown in Western Europe are imported from Britain and the USA.

Analysis of international travel movements suggests that three-quarters of all travel is between non-English speaking countries. This suggests a large demand for either foreign language learning or the increasing use of English as a lingua franca' (Graddol 2007.) All in all, the traditional role of English as a foreign language is under re-evaluation.

Globalization of the IT sector, for one, is accelerating the effect of English as a commodity. For some time now English has dominated the IT industry, from research to the design of software. Naturally, English is the language of the Internet. Even NNSs write their blogs in English to reach a wider international audience. Young people communicate globally through Messenger - often in English. It is also the major language of popular culture. The young see English as a useful tool for achieving economic and social advancement. English has also been the language of international trade for decades now. Actually, the electronic media and the Internet particularly did the final job in promoting English to a global lingua franca.

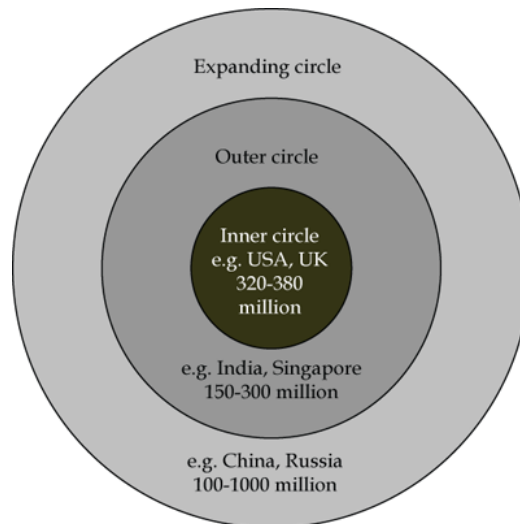
Corbin (2007) points out that English also dominates academic research. It is dependent upon having a language of common understanding. In 1997, the Science Citation Index reported that 95 percent of its articles were written in English, even though only half of them came from authors in English-speaking countries. Kirkpatrick (2006) gives an example of the rapid change: In 1950 all contributions to *Zeitschrift fur Tierpsychologie*, were in German, while in 1984 a surprising 95 per cent were written in English. Knowing that writing in a foreign language is not nearly the same as writing in one's mother tongue, this can be problematic. An NNS of English face a challenge that an NS do not. Kirkpatrick (2006: 181) raises the question of mostly one-way flow of knowledge from the inner circle to the other circles, due to the

disadvantage the NNS has when trying to publish in Anglo-American journals.

To conclude, I would say English spreads because there is a demand for it. If this demand causes the demand for other languages to lose importance or even die, we will have to support their demand. Some local languages might really be in danger of dying because of the hegemony of English.

## **2.2 Model of concentric circles and its reconceptualizations**

Braj Kachru, a scholar in the field since the 1960s, was the first one to put the issue of global English on the academic agenda. His books are most often used as points of reference for discussion about the role of Englishes in the world. Kachru (1985) depicts the spread of English with his concentric Circles of English, the 'three circles' model (see figure 1). This model was innovative in that one English became many Englishes (Kirkpatrick 2006:28). In the Inner Circle English functions as a native language, the Outer Circle has a Colonial history with English and English is in language policies, in the Expanding Circle, English is used as a foreign language. However, this model may have underestimated the growing role of English in the Expanding Circle countries like Finland and some other countries. Several attempts to reconceptualise the Englishes in the world today have been made since.



*Figure 1* Three Concentric Circles of English as depicted by Kachru (1985:16)



*Figure 2* A reconceptualization of the three circles by Kachru

Most European countries are located in the expanding circle where English is a foreign language with no official status, but where it is increasingly used as a language of wider communication (Jessner 2006:3). Finland is one of those countries. Many Finns are bilingual and some are trilingual in Finnish,

Swedish and English. English is supposedly a foreign language for us, but it is increasingly a language we use at work and even school. CLIL (Content and language integrated learning), with its origins in Canada, is expanding from schools to universities all the time. Northern Europeans in general do not have a discernible national variety of English, but there is widespread fluency in the language. The situation in countries like Malta and the Scandinavian countries does not seem to be strongly fitted to the descriptions given for the static circles and may be said to pose problems for the model.

Modiano (1999: 23-5) criticizes Kachru's model for being less useful for viewing the development of EIL for a couple of reasons. First, because of the the centralized position of the major varieties, which might be considered inaccurate among proficient speakers of the language but who are living outside of this inner, privileged circle. Secondly, the symbolic central positioning may give the picture that all the speakers in the central varieties are proficient in the language, although this, according to Modiano, for example, is not the case. These varieties are not even always easily comprehensible internationally. He argues that Kachru's definition of the inner circle re-establishes the notion that the language is the property of specific groups and that these experts, speaking a prestige variety, determine 'correct usage'.

Why does it matter how speakers are positioned in these paradigms? Modiano (*ibid.*) explains that even though speakers themselves do not mind it, they matter because the paradigms or theorizing profoundly affect the development and implementation of the educational norms. So, we in Finland might want to ask: In the present situation, is it useful or even possible to maintain the L1 standards of correctness in our language classes in the future? (Schell 2008).

Graddol (2006: 11) has made some alterations to the model. He decided to "promote" 19 countries (primarily in Central America, Northern Europe, and East Africa) from EFL to L2 section because "the use of English for



intranational communication is greatly increasing,” though admittedly “undocumented and unquantified”. However, Graddol (2006:11) states that an EFL country has “no local model of English”. Also, he claims that the abundant intranational use of English-language email augments the tendency to interpret the fluent international use of spoken English in Northern Europe as evidence that the region has transitioned to the Outer Circle and many of its Anglophones have “migrated” to L1. Graddol (2000: 58). Obviously, and according to Cramer (2007) the linguistic realities in these countries today do not match their position in Kachru’s model. Graddol (2006) then proposes a new model, still based on the idea of the concentric circles model, but which allows for varieties of English to be in transition between the circles. It comprises of a norm-providing group and a norm-dependent group.

Ur (2008) suggests it is more useful to define the three circles of users of English internationally simply in terms of their level of competence in the language rather than in terms of where they live and whether or not they are ‘native speakers’. Her ‘circles’ are: fully competent, competent and limited. Several scholars, on the other hand, warn us about confusing the fluency of individuals with their placement in the Three Circles model (see e.g. Kachru 1985, Crystal 1997, Graddol 1997). However, the situation may be changing as proficiency in English is greater in all areas of the world. In Finland there is no need to use English intranationally as “a vehicle for unity” (Kachru 2005: 64), but it is a ‘vehicle for business and education’ in Finland and my study focuses on this particular point of view.

Graddol (2008) pays attention to the speed of the development. He says that with more than 6 billion potential learners in the world, ELT has always seemed an endless pursuit, but suddenly it seems we are talking about a future in which the mission has been accomplished! Categorizations of English have helped us in describing the users of English in many ways. There is also the classic native /SL-FL division that has received some criticism lately. According to Jenkins (2003:142) the traditional hierarchy of

Englishes has been: standard L1 Englishes, non-standard L1 Englishes, standard L2 Englishes, non-standard L2 Englishes, and non-use of English. Her (2003:142-3) reconceptualized hierarchy of Englishes now is:

- Standard spoken Englishes for international use (bilingual varieties)
- Standard spoken Englishes for local use (L2 and L1 contexts)
- Non-standard Englishes (L2 and L1 contexts)

Are the varieties of expanding circle unified enough to be called varieties, like in inner and outer circle? This is partly what ELF scholars are trying to find out. Some researchers have come up with a question that can serve as a touchstone for separating Anglophone countries into norm-providing and norm-dependent: *Do compatriots speak English when no foreigners are present?* In the norm-dependent group, the answer is “rarely” In the norm-providing group, the answer is “often enough to generate their own norms.” (Schell 2008: 120).

It seems the terminology and circles are in turmoil now that the speed of globalization increases. It is increasingly harder to define which group each individual belongs to as proficiency, roles, nationality and the functions of the language all get mixed up.

### **2.3 English in Finland**

English in Scandinavia has an extremely high profile and can be said to be almost like a ‘second language’ at least for the younger generation. It worries some of us that the number of students learning other languages at school is decreasing. The utility factor of English is high, i.e. it has high value in so many domains that it spreads faster than other languages.

Meierkord (2004) investigated the use of English as an international lingua franca among students from outer and inner circle countries. She studied their informal spoken data. 95 per cent of all productions observed with competent speakers of English from the countries in the expanding circle can be said to be regular (i.e. following native speaker norms). Conformity to

native norms is thus overwhelming. Generally, younger generations of Finns can be said to be quite proficient in English. According to Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Communities (2009), in fourteen of the twenty one Member States for which data were available, English was the most commonly spoken foreign language among adults aged 25 to 64 years. 99.8% of students in upper secondary education in Finland in 2007 studied two or more foreign languages and the most studied foreign language was English. In 2007, the highest shares of the population aged 25 to 64 who perceived they spoke two or more foreign languages were found in Slovenia (72%), Finland and Slovakia (both 68%). In Finland, the best known foreign language among this age group was English.

However, being able to speak or understand one variety of English is not enough. One must be able to understand the countless varieties of English in order to be able to succeed in working life etc. A lot of Finns have to communicate with people from all over the world on a daily basis in business life. The English classroom in Finland rarely offers the students a chance to hear all these varieties. Nor have they been included in the recorded teaching material. This is, however, changing at least in the Business English teaching materials and for a good reason. Nevertheless, it is likely to take some time before the attitude change reaches schools and all the teachers. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages does not have much of the ELF perspective either. This is discussed more thoroughly in Hynninen's (2007) Master's thesis.

English is actively sought out by people in Finland and all over the world (Brutt-Griffler 2002). But is there a notably Finnish variety of English developing? Is English adapted to reflect our own cultural norms or is it just a communicative tool? Do people in any way show their identities through their English? Also, is there a difference when Finns are using ELF intranationally or internationally? These are all questions that interest me.

In Finland the majority of learners are normally taught by local teachers. In their professional lives, a great number of people are using English as a lingua franca intranationally and internationally. Kirkpatrick (2006:33) argues that this state of the matters provides a process that leads to new varieties of English. In my study I am interested in the subjects' experiences of their own 'Finnish English' as well as how it relates to other varieties in their workplace. Schell (2008:4) says 'The low *internal colingual level* among anglophones within their respective countries means that new national varieties are not being created in Northern Europe despite the abundance of communication in English there.' I think the internal colingual level among Finns working in companies where English is the language of business must be quite high. Perhaps this communication does not have a high enough status for its speakers for it to be perceived as a variety of its own. In my study I seek to find out whether the respondents think they speak the Finnish English variety or a kind of interlanguage. Schell asks if the community's internal colingual level is a good theoretical measure of the pace of norm generation. It will also be interesting to hear if the participants in this study think there is a specific CompanyA variety.

I will now have a look at an increasingly common phenomenon in the world and in Finland, namely that of having English as the official language of corporations. This is also the context for my interview study.

### **2.3.1 English as the official corporate language in Finland**

The ideology of English as the language of corporate enterprise has strengthened the perception of English as the lingua franca of international business. The importance of English as the language of global commerce has led many non-English companies, including a few in Finland, to adopt English as their official operating language (Louhiala-Salminen 1999:100). Translations from a language to another bring extra costs and take a lot of time: this is one of the reasons why English prevails in business world.

The fact that English is the global lingua franca is commonplace. Global business communication most often takes place in English or more correctly, ELF or international English. In many sectors, the professional terminology is in English anyway, making the language the natural choice for everyday written communication. Emails are often written in English from the beginning to make it possible to involve colleagues or partners in other countries, and annual reports are published in English for international readability. English is attractive also because of its international pervasiveness, and its (suggested) grammatical simplicity. It has been suggested that there is a linguistic inter-culture created by the interlocutors in communities of practice of this kind. (Meierkord 1996, Firth 1996.)

However, having a common corporate language that is not one's own L1 is not without problems. Welch et al. (2001) studied how peoples' perceptions of language alter information flow in intercultural situations. The findings showed that adopting a common corporate language might hinder or change information flows and communication within companies, because the employees have to face the challenge of using a non-native language in internal communication. This is one of the interests in my present study.

Several studies have been carried out in Finland about the Finns' use of English at their work or at their studies (e.g. Bergroth 2007). In general, non-native speakers working for multinational companies with English as the official language are not opposed to the choice of language. However, they still seem to struggle to some extent with motivation and attitude problems, proficiency problems and some specific linguistic problems. It will be interesting to hear how the English as a lingua franca approach fits in this context and whether these people can be said to have an ELF speaker identity

Most often, these people work through the medium of a language which is still being learned, under construction so to say. In Alan Firth's (2008) words they 'learn as they go'. Speaking focuses on 'fluency', not always

grammatical accuracy. Learners develop this fluency by using English to communicate for a variety of purposes. It is more like language acquisition, not enforced learning. Perhaps we should ask whether the focus is on understanding, clarity and mutual intelligibility partly because other goals are too hard to reach? There must be situations in business negotiations, for example, when the NNSs would actually benefit from greater fluency in English to be fully able to participate in discussions. This might be a challenging issue to study as it is difficult to see the significance of something one does not have.

The linguistic exchanges in business context often have certain common features. These speech events can be said to normally provide the speakers with a lot of contextual information, the speakers often have the same frame of reference, and they know what they are going to talk about (cf. Björkman 2008). All this lowers the risk of miscommunication or other disturbance in communication.

According to Vollstedt (2002:100-101) difficulties in language use can have several consequences. First of all, there are the financial costs caused by the impaired flow of information, which can mean delayed, incorrect or inexact information, misunderstandings and poor cooperation among co-workers. Second, establishing social relationships among the employees suffers if one does not have a good command of the language. Third, Vollstedt argues that employees who are forced to use a foreign language at work are often unsure of themselves because "they are lacking those verbal tools of expression available to native speakers". I intend to find out how these issues show in the replies of the respondents in my study.

### **2.3.2 Corporate English training**

Today most of the on-the-job language training is conducted by business language schools. The pedagogical contents and proficiency targets of those schools vary widely. Moreover, diagnostic tests are not always carried out or they are not very advanced. However, studies have shown that businesses

want training that is individually targeted and accurate. The language trainers should thus be professionals and able to adjust teaching in various contexts. There is a need for highly specialized teachers who can teach advanced students. Professional vocabulary as well as getting to know different genres of speech have been mentioned among the most needed skills. Also, the teachers must be able to motivate and make the student experience feelings of success. (Sajavaara and Salo 2007: 239-243).

ELF research is a response to the new, more global context of English. If ELF awareness can help learners by increasing motivation, would it not be time to give this information to the ELF speakers in the corporate setting as well? The present tendency in corporate English training, at least in Finland, is that the local NNSE teachers teach the grammar and the basics and NSE teachers are often demanded by the customers to do the rest of the work.

## **2.4 ELF – A Variety, Varieties or a Function?**

Ian Macmaster (2004) lists some of the concepts that are close to English as a lingua franca (ELF): International English, World English (WE), Globish, and English as an International Language (EIL). There is also World Standard Spoken English (WSSE), which was created by Crystal. Definitions differ to some extent from each other, but nevertheless are sometimes used almost interchangeably. English as a *lingua franca*, in my opinion, best calls attention to international communication, stressing the role of English as a medium of such communication. The term ELF is increasingly used in the research literature and is now the established term.

I will now move on to discuss and define the notion of ELF, present and future research into ELF, its goals and its challenges. Also the concept of a native speaker is looked at, as well as a few other related and even opposing notions like idiomaticity, accent and fossilization are discussed shortly.

### 2.4.1 Defining ELF

Studying the literature on the nature of ELF seemed to leave me with a question: What is actually meant by the concept of ELF and who is it for? It was hard to pin down what **exactly** the scholars were referring to. After reading Mario Saraceni's article (2008) I was better able to pin down the problem: it was a question of 'form' or 'function'. I do not seem to be alone with this, as several scholars have paid attention to the vagueness of the definition. Consistency in terminology may be needed in future.

I will first give some definitions of ELF and then discuss the problems in them. Lingua Franca, to start with, is the language of communication among speakers of other tongues. ELF, on the other hand, has (in its narrowest sense) been described as 'a contact language' between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen *foreign* language of communication. (Firth 1996: 240, emphasis in original). House's (1999: 74) definition is: "ELF interactions occur between conversationalists of different language backgrounds, for none of whom English is the mother tongue". Kirkpatrick (2007: 155) defines ELF as "a medium of communication [used] by people who do not speak the same first language". Jenkins (2007a: 2) says ELF has now come to be conceived as "an emerging English that exists in its *own right* and which is being described in its *own terms* rather than by comparison with ENL." Seidlhofer (2007), too, defines ELF as a way of referring to communication in English between speakers with different first languages. According to her, ELF interaction **can** include native [English] speakers, but in most cases, it is a contact language between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication. Seidlhofer (2004: 213) also describes ELF as a "linguistic phenomenon in its own right". However, she wonders why

so little thought has so far gone into the most essential things like the nature of the language itself as an international means of communication or finding out how ELF differs from ENL, 'English as a native language' (Seidlhofer 2002: 271).



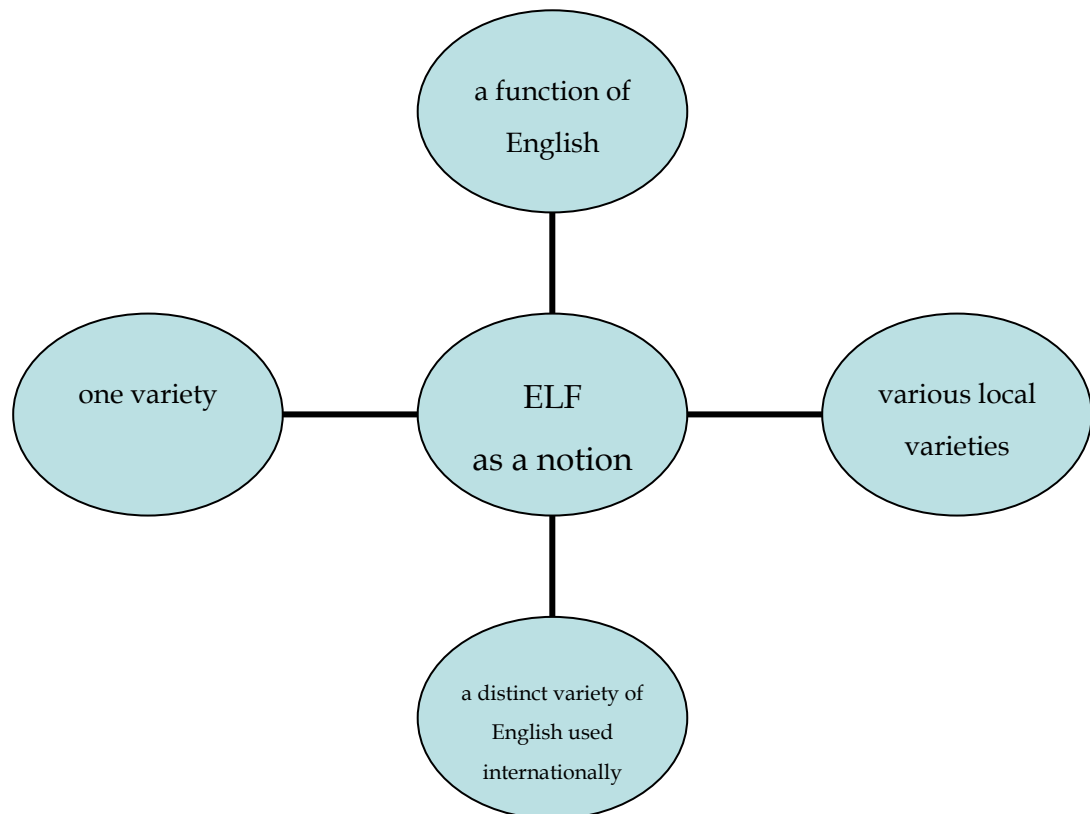
Jenkins (2003: 4) agrees and claims that the power and potential of this phenomenon that a billion speakers successfully use in their everyday lives is still underestimated. Jenkins (2006) and Seidlhofer (2005) both see a mismatch between theory and practice. They think research on WEs and ELF needs to be reflected at the practical level too.

To return to the definition problems, I now want to discuss Saraceni's criticism of Jenkins' and other ELF scholars' writings more closely. As was argued before, it seems to be easy to misinterpret what ELF is and Jenkins herself admits that "a number of misconceptions about ELF remain" (2007a: 29-30). A certain inconsistency in the definition and description of ELF must be the reason for this, as Saraceni (2008) also suggests. Are we talking about a language **variety** or a **set of varieties** (i.e. form) or the **role** that English plays in a variety of contexts in the world (i.e. function)? Does ELF refer to one international variety or many local varieties or - all of them? Opinions differ somewhat so far. Another confusing point is whether ELF research offers (or forces) any pedagogical implications. Some hear a 'didactic tone' in ELF discourse (Saraceni 2008:25) and some hope for it (Sifakis 2007).

From the point of view of my study, it is interesting whether Finnish speakers of English, using the language at work with people whose L1 is some other language **as well as** with their compatriots (L1 being Finnish), can be considered 'ELFers' even in situations where the interlocutors have a common L1. In other words, they have a common mother tongue, but still converse in English at work with each other. Or is it, like it is with NSs, that ELF **can** be said to include even situations where there are only people with a common L1? I know there are articles in preparation concerning the definition problems, but unfortunately I do not have access to those yet. However, in my interview study, I will treat even the interaction of Finns with each other in English as ELF.

The question above is partly answered by Meierkord (2007: 199) who makes a distinction between two different kinds of uses of lingua franca:

intranational use (e.g. English in India) and international use (e.g. English between Germans and Japanese). As ELF is used in many senses at the moment, I try to clarify the picture with a figure (see Figure 3). Nevertheless, I agree with McArthur (1998) when he says: “All varieties exist within a continuum and not in neatly labelled sociolinguistic boxes.” However, sometimes the boxes help to see the real picture and even potential problems.



*Figure 3* The notion of ELF and its possible (mis)interpretations (based on Saraceni , 2008)

I will then go on to describe what the ELF approach comprises of and what it has been said to be and what it is not. First, the English as a lingua franca approach or movement claims that linguistic standards do not have to conform to the native speaker model because there is a reduced code which is sufficient for the purposes of communication between non-native speakers in international settings. The word ‘reduced’ has caused some bewilderment, in fact. The claimed inclusivity and ‘tolerance for diversity’ (Seidlhofer 2006: 44) of the approach is based on establishing the possibility of an international

English which is “negotiated and developed by ELF speakers themselves rather than imposed from ‘above’ by native speakers” (Jenkins 2006: 36), and which will “present a counterweight to hegemonic Anglo-American dominated English” (p.38, citing Robert Phillipson). However, as Jenkins (2007a:19) states, ELF is not meant to be mono-centric and it is not the goal of ELF to establish a single lingua franca norm to which all users in different contexts should conform. Seidlhofer (2006), however, likes to see ELF as a notion offering language learners alternatives to the prescriptive, often NS-based rules.

Normally, the situational context and the constellation of speakers vary from one conversation to another (Hülmbauer 2007:7). The context parameter thus needs to be recognized as crucial in the evaluation of ELF forms. Firth (2008) also emphasizes the fact that ELF exchanges are situation dependent and extremely dynamic. The more sceptic scholars have regarded this as one of the reasons why it might be impossible to ever create a core or a code for ELF. Although the speakers of ELF have spatial distance to each other, they recognize LFE as a shared resource, says Canagarajah (2007: 925). He argues that the speakers tend to activate a mutually recognized set of attitudes, forms, and conventions that ensure successful communication in LFE whenever they interact with each other.

Despite the form/function problem, pedagogical implications have been mentioned in research into ELF. The basic principles for an ELF pedagogic strategy are, according to Jenkins (2003):

- No native-speaker specific (idiomatic) usage
- No non-essential grammar
- No non-essential pronunciation
- No native-speaker goals

This is interesting to both students and teachers of English and is sure to arouse discussion among them. Moreover, EFL and ELF are said to be totally different conceptualizations of English. Jenkins sees the users of English as “successful and proficient speakers of ELF varieties”, although, more

traditionally, they might have been seen as just having a low level of proficiency in the language. Consequently, in ELF, discourse errors for one, are not determined by reference to ENL norms and thus ELF proficiency in general should not be judged in relation to the English of its native speakers. (Jenkins 2007a:21)

There is increasing interest in English as a lingua franca. Two conferences on ELF have been organized in recent years, one in Helsinki, Finland and one in Southampton, England. Descriptive research on ELF is conducted by Jennifer Jenkins (2000, 2007a) and Anna Mauranen (2003), Barbara Seidlhofer (2004, 2005), Juliane House (1999), Anne Lesznyák (2004), Sandra Lee McKay (2002) as well as Andy Kirkpatrick (2007), Cristiane Meierkord (2006), Alan Firth (1997, 2009), and many others. The research deals with ELF in specific locations, ELF accents, ELF in different domains, ELF at different linguistic levels and teacher and learner attitudes towards ELF. Two corpora of spoken ELF have been compiled, a million-word Corpus of English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings (ELFA) in Finland and a million-word Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English as a lingua franca (VOICE) compiled in Austria (see Mauranen 2003 and Seidlhofer 2004: 219.) Several scholars have also commented on this research, some with criticism.

Also, there has been quite a lot of research on attitudes towards NNS accents of English by NS of English (e.g. Bresnahan et al. 2002). However, research on attitudes of NNS of English towards their own NNS accent and other NNS accents of English has been largely neglected. A rising concern about the lack of micro-level research, i.e. empirical research on the use of ELF has been expressed by several scholars since the 90's, e.g. Crystal (1999), Firth (1996), Jenkins (2006), Seidlhofer (2001, 2003), and McKay (2003:7). A lot has happened since, but I think there is still a need to study for example ELF in workplaces and also at-work language training, because adjusting language training to correspond to the needs of working life is, to say the least, challenging. To do this, more cooperation between the providers of language training and the workplaces is needed. (Sajavaara and Salo 2007).

Empirical findings should also reach the practices and the users. We need to know what constitutes communicative effectiveness in the international business arena and how ELF research can contribute to this. Cultural and linguistic internationalisation and standardisation is thus an interesting field of study.

Whether we should consider the vast number of people, using English internationally every day in their work or otherwise, as foreign language learners or language users/experts in their own right, is a hot topic in sociolinguistics at the moment. I will try to shed light on this question by trying to dig into the perceptions of the Finnish speakers of English. Is it even necessary to give someone the label of a 'competent user' if s/he sees herself or himself as a learner of English. Also, I think it is important for the teachers and language trainers to know what a student's learning goal is. It may well be that signs of so called stabilization or fossilization may just be a sign that something else than the native speaker already serves as their target.

We also need a clearer understanding of learner self-beliefs. According to Cohen and Norst (1989:61) research shows that:

There is something fundamentally different about learning a language, compared to learning another skill or gaining other knowledge, namely, that language and self are so closely bound, if not identical, that an attack on one is an attack on the other. (Cohen and Norst 1989:61)

Self-constructs might play a much more central role in FLL than in learning other things. My study for its part attempts to find out how sensitive an issue English language proficiency is perceived to be in the workplace.

#### **2.4.2 Main Goals of ELF approach**

Abolishing prejudice against the non-native speaker is a stated aim of the English as a lingua franca movement (Seidlhofer 2002). Prejudice is said to show in various ways, in downgrading attitudes as well as discrimination in employment. Another much discussed issue is whether the different first languages of ELF speakers start to affect the English language and the

standards in general (see e.g. Jenkins 2007a). It seems obvious L1s have an influence, but it is more controversial whether the NNSs are given 'a right' to consciously or unconsciously create new forms or standards. Crystal (1997: 138), who created the term World Standard Spoken English (WSSE), says "There is no reason for L2 features not to become part of WSSE". He adds that "This would be especially likely if there were features that were shared by several (or all) L2 varieties". ELF, however, has no intention to be a system like WSSE, it is claimed. Nevertheless, ELF proponents would like to entitle NNSEs to create their own variety/varieties, to become the owners of their English so to say. ELF scholars argue we should concentrate on ELF **users** rather than conceptualizing the participants in an ELF interaction as **learners** aspiring to acquire a NS-like accent or skill. (Mauranen 2005, 2006). Mauranen also sees ELF as a future language target:

[b]y observing language which works in ELF contexts, we can move towards principled and explicit language targets for international speakers of English, based on empirical findings (Mauranen 2005: 275).

The ELF users' language target should be to speak with an accent that guarantees that the interlocutors are able to understand each other in an optimum fashion and so that miscommunication is prevented (Jenkins 2000). As most problems seem to occur in the pronunciation, the Lingua franca core (LFC) was developed by Jennifer Jenkins in 2000. It was meant to serve as a guideline for instruction of pronunciation.

The core features of phonology, those significant for intelligibility, according to LFC are:

- consonant sounds **except** voiced/voiceless *th* and dark *l*
- vowel quantity
- consonant deletion
- nuclear stress

Interestingly, those seem to be at least partly the features that teachers of English in Finland struggle with. Those are features that do not matter in the Finnish language so much and are thus hard to explain to students. It is not easy to learn something you do not even hear or notice. Sensitivity to

linguistic input is essential for learning and teachers face a challenge here, as noticing is essential in the language learning process.

The non-core features, i.e. those that are not necessary for intelligibility purposes, are:

- vowel quality except the sound in RP *fur*
- vowel addition
- weak forms
- consonant sounds *th* and dark *l*
- word stress
- pitch direction
- stress-timed rhythm

These have provoked more questions than the core features among other scholars. Much time is certainly spent on trying to teach these features in the English classrooms around the world. Jenkins (2007a) justifies the LFC by emphasizing the fact that the pronunciation norms in any given interaction are to be determined by the ELF users themselves. Moreover, she explains the original idea was to promote NNS-NNS communication, not to make teaching of pronunciation easier as such.

I think pronunciation instruction is not very organized at the moment in Finnish schools or workplace training. A lot of the pronunciation models come in fact from the media, the Internet, TV and films. In a way, we take it for granted that the students get enough input and models from the world outside the classroom – the media does part of the teacher’s job. Considering this, can an LFC model function as a target or facilitate the teacher’s job when there is a competing NSE model in the media?

There is, like I said, quite a lot of resistance to the idea of ELF and more specifically to the LFC proposal (Jenkins 2007a: 22-29). Perhaps we should ask what alternative ways exist to guarantee mutual intelligibility in ELF exchanges? Obviously, codification must start somewhere, but if LFC is to become any kind of norm, I am sure English teachers around the world would like to know that there is no uncertainty about the core and non-core features.

Davies (1991) and many others think a standard language should always function as the target language. ELF scholars are aware of the importance of standards and ELF is now being codified with a wish to get it standardized (cf. Mauranen, Seidlhofer). This would contribute in making it a recognized variety (or recognized varieties) among others. Whether people are ready to ever accept it as a standard, target or model, even after codification, remains to be seen. Nevertheless, future research will certainly benefit from the newly created ELF corpora.

ELF has been accused of patronizing learners (see e.g. Saraceni 2008). However, at the moment ELF researchers are only making suggestions as to what is **not** necessary to teach for ELF communication, rather than prescribing what should be taught, claims Jenkins (2007a:22). She says ELF is a matter of a learner choice. As to what the actual target for learning English would be researchers claim that 'the intercultural speaker' and a 'successful L2 user' is the attainable ideal (Byram 1997: 70, Seidlhofer 2003a: 23). It is not the purpose of ELF to lower teaching standards, but make them relevant for the present situation. Unfortunately, for as long as the attitudes and practices remain the same, there is not much 'learner choice' in practice. Someone should take the first steps, but as no new standard has actually emerged, this is impossible for practitioners. I will thus move on to depict the major challenges for ELF.

### **2.4.3 Main Challenges of ELF**

Some scholars (see, for example, Prodromou, 2007a, McMaster, 2008) claim that the variety of ELF is not yet a well-enough developed concept and/or model for ELT professionals to follow in practice. Canagarajah (2007:925) explains the reasons for this. He says that due to the diversity of this communicative medium, Lingua Franca English is inter-subjectively constructed in each specific context of interaction.

The form of this English is negotiated by each set of speakers for their purposes. The speakers are able to monitor each other's language proficiency to determine mutually the appropriate grammar, phonology, lexical range, and pragmatic



conventions that would ensure intelligibility. Therefore, it is difficult to describe this language a priori. (Canagarajah 2007:925)

At the face of it and from my own language teaching experience I totally agree with Canagarajah. This is also where the problem with ELF arises. Do the speakers/learners of LFE (lingua franca English) need the **'what'** to be defined for them from the outside. I think what they need is assurance that their LFE is **good enough** and that they do not have to (and most likely will not be able to) sound like native speakers. In other words, they do not need a model but **awareness** of other goals and **a new attitude**. If this attitude change then leads to changed goals in learning, from their own initiative, institutions must be ready to offer other choices along with the traditional NS target-based instruction. It will be interesting to see what the interviewees in this study think about this. Kirkpatrick (2007:37) says we have to face a conundrum if we want to standardise World Englishes, meaning that we will be faced with various models that themselves contain internal variation. Saraceni argues ELF is not a controllable thing:

The evolution of languages and the ways people negotiate their use on a day-to-day basis are completely outside the control of academia. (Saraceni 2008:26)

Saraceni (2008), on the other hand, emphasizes the fact that nobody **wishes** to arrest the development of lingua franca English, even though Jenkins (2007a:17) seems to think so. Görlach (2002:12) worries about the fact that as the demand for English will continue and possibly increase, more and more people will acquire *"broken, deficient forms of English which are adequate to the extent that they permit the communicational functions they were learnt for..."* He also argues that ELF is 'stifling' other European languages (p. 1). Trudgill (2002: 150-151) considers native speakers *"the true repository of English"* and he adds that *"there are so many of them that they can afford to let non-native speakers do what they like with it so long as what they do is confined to a few words here and there."* Kirkpatrick (2007: 14-5) argues that linguistic prejudice - whether we admit it or not - plays a fundamental role in how we judge languages and varieties. This means that the battle is not nearly over, rather in its infancy. Jenkins defends ELF by saying that as

“a phenomenon without precedent, [ELF] does not fit neatly into pre-existing categories on the tired old dichotomy of native/nonnative Englishes” (2007b: 414).

Changing people’s attitudes is a challenge. Mauranen (2008) argues that teachers and educators have been most receptive when it comes to the concept of ELF. Linguists have had more difficulties in accepting the concept. This is symptomatic as teachers have to cope with the real-life problems of teaching and learning. Obviously, ELF happens in Real Life and real life solutions are welcome. Teachers of English and users of ELF live in different worlds to some extent. On the other hand, Jenkins’ attitude study (2007a) revealed conservative attitudes among teachers as well. In my study I seek to find out whether my interviewees consider ELF as a desired or valid option or as a potential model in their own situations.

It has also been claimed that ELF is just a justification for mediocrity (Ahvenainen 2007) Also, O’Keefe et al. (2007) argue that it is yet to be demonstrated that ELF exists as a variety of English rather than as a function of the use of English which responds to every context differently (in the same way that people adapt their language for use with small children). The assumption that ELF is a variety brings with it inferences like that the variety is a somewhat "reduced" form of the native variety, that the reduced repertoire leads to a reduced syllabus, and that features like idioms, for example, are likely to be dispensed with. On the other hand, if we are in fact talking about a **function** of English, then there would seem to be no reasons to "reduce" anything. Language users would make their own choices from their available repertoire of forms. (O’Keefe et al. 2007: 98–9) This, again, goes back to the definition problem. Jenkins (2008) points out that ELF is **not a fixed model** for imitation and it is not prescribed for everyone, at least not yet. The researchers still have to work to find the common features of ELF use and we still have to wait for some sort of **model** of ELF in order to be able to make reference to it and not only ENL (see e.g. Seidlhofer 2004). As for the situation in Finland, it could be claimed that ELF, as spoken here, is

just “The English dictionary meets the Finnish grammar”, or a window to the Finnish mind - in English. A Finn recognizes a Finn even in English, as they have a common knowledge of what they sound like in English and the L1 almost always makes its imprints on their English as well. For a foreigner, however, the Finnishness might not be that clear. It may sound as any ELF.

The generation of a new language variety involves the social proof of its norms, and indeed the “crowd” of speakers becomes more influential as it grows larger. As more people use a variety to communicate with each other, its validity becomes proven by the consensus of their common experience. (Schell, 2008: 216)

Who owns English? The ownership of English (Widdowson 1994) and the status of the native speaker (Graddol 2006) are still under lively discussion. The central role of English non-native speakers as active agents of language change has been recognized (e.g. Brutt-Griffler 2002) and the need for large-scale research and a thorough description of ‘English as a lingua franca’ has been stressed (e.g. Seidlhofer 2001, 2004). In my study I hope to find out if there is any degree of ownership of English in the Finnish speakers of the language.

ELF scholars claim that NNSs’ own idiomatic expressions are a sign of creativity and a way of showing their cultural identity. This is not easy to accept by all teachers and linguists. Dellar (2008), for example, considers this merely direct translation from one’s L1. He asks whether ELF scholars are arguing for greater tolerance from native speaker norms, are they giving an alternative model or are ELF-ers just opposed to bad teaching. He concludes that although English is **used** as ELF there is no such **thing** as ELF and most students still see NS competence as their goal.

Hülmbauer (2007:6) claims, quite surprisingly, that:

What differentiates ELF from EFL (English as a foreign language) so substantially is that its users neither aim at communicating *with*, nor *like* NSs of the language, or only to a very limited extent.

I find it hard to apply this to the Finnish context, at least. Most Finnish ELF users today have a history of being learners of English (EFL learners) at

school and, most probably, thought they were going to speak English with NSs **as well as** with NNSs, probably even more so with NSs. Some even aspire to speak *like* them. This raises the question of whether the ELF speaker concept includes all types of speakers of lingua franca English, or is a certain kind of language learning history required? My question is: With a background of being an EFL learner (in Finland), can one really become an ELF speaker in one's own mind (in the sense the ELF scholars use it)? As argued before, ELF and EFL are said to be far from each other: "ELF is not the same as EFL, nor is it failed ENL" (Jenkins 2006: 155).

#### **2.4.4 ELF characteristics**

A high degree of cooperation is a typical and widely acknowledged characteristic of almost all ELF interactions (Meierkord 1996, Firth 1996). Studies into the nature of ELF interactions show that many of these conversations are characterized by self-regulating strategies of collaboration toward successful interaction. Rasmussen and Wagner (2000) studied lingua franca telephone conversations. They found that the participants use strategies they assume to be universally valid and their goal is to avoid intercultural communication problems. So, in Meierkord's (2006:23) words, a lot of 'processes of levelling and regularization at all linguistic levels' is involved in these interactions between different individual Englishes.' Meierkord (2004:128) describes ELF as a syntactically heterogenous form of English. Conversation in lingua franca English is rather heterogenous due to the diverse linguistic and cultural background of speakers. She also argues that the communicative behaviour not only reflects the cultural norms of each culture but that it also represents the individual stages of their interlanguage with its specific characteristics as well as the results of adaptation to the interlocutors. From an English teacher's point of view this seems only a very natural finding. Even if we were to find a common basis of ELF talk, there will always be situation dependent and individual differences in ELF exchanges, I am sure. Consequently, it seems that we are still a long way from developing a standard international form of English.

A basic finding in lingua franca studies is thus the cooperative nature of lingua franca communication (Meierkord 2000). This is an interesting finding especially as studies have emphasized the pragmatic problems encountered by non-native speakers when interacting with **native** speakers of English. Research shows that ELF differs from NSE in many ways. Seidlhofer (2005) observed that ELF speakers tend to add elements (e.g., nouns or prepositions) to make the propositional meaning clearer. Pitzl et al. (2008: 32) take an example of this: an ELF speaker might use *increasement* instead of the noun *increase*. The nominal suffix *-ment* is attached to the base form, which stresses the nominal word class and distinguishes it from the verb. Moreover, in lingua franca English pauses normally occur between conversational phases where native speakers would use illocutions (like “*I’d better be off now*”). Individual topics are usually short and more superficial than in NS talk. Topics were shown to be changed after less than ten turns had been taken. Pickering (2007) notes that misunderstandings are overcome by topic changes and not negotiations like NSs would do. The use of conversational gambits and formulaic responses also seems to be different. The LF speakers rarely dare to vary their routine formulae. Stereotype phrases like *Hello*, and *Bye* seem to be used most of the time. Also, supportive laughter often replaces verbal back channels. This is surprising as English teachers normally like to give a wide variety of phrases that the students could choose from. Why then do the learners resort to the same old phrases year after year? According to Meierkord (2000), the low variation in ritual speech acts is a classroom- or textbook- induced characteristic. By this she means that there is not enough variation in the teaching material. This can be so as most textbook material mainly consists of some kind of core English, without too many nuances. However, it is possible to bump into more varied forms elsewhere, but that requires an important skill, i.e. the skill of noticing, and also the skill to apply what you learn-as-you-go. On the other hand, minimal variation can be a sign of the learners’ economic language behaviour, i.e. only so many expressions are learned (and thus used) as are necessary to succeed in conversation. Meierkord (2000) explains:

More competent speakers may still prefer to use 'standard' or 'stereotype' expressions as they want to make sure that they will be understood by their interlocutors and may even wish to avoid embarrassing them by using expressions these may not understand.

All in all, 'Pragmatism' tends to win the day' says McArthur (2003:55). He says cultural interest and linguistic curiosity are minority pursuits only while pragmatic reasoning is more so. He lists three questions that most people ask when considering a language of wider use:

- Will knowing and using this language make my life easier and /or richer? (in any sense of the word *rich*)
- Will my children need this language to get on in the world?
- If so, how soon should they start acquiring it?

I would, however, like to emphasize the importance of personality traits of the speaker. There are self-confident, shy, and something-in-between language users. Some are ready to take the risk of losing face (when taking risks) and by doing it they simultaneously reinforce the use of even the more uncommon phrases. I find it interesting to see how pragmatic attitudes there are among my interviewees. Could the so called engineer-like thinking also apply to linguistic choices and risk-taking?

To return to the specific features of ELF: Supportive laughter is sometimes used instead of back-channels like '*yeah*', '*right*'. Also a lot of cajolers, i.e. verbal appeals for the listener's sympathy (*I mean, you know*), occur. Whether this shows a speaker's desire to cooperate or if it is just a sign of insecurity is not clear to me. ELF speakers' reduction strategies seem to lead to their choosing safe topics. So, it is not only important to study what ELF speakers say, but also what they do **not** say. This is naturally difficult to show and might be the reason for the rarity of findings here. In my study I attempt to get some replies to this question as well. Finally, Meierkord (2000) found two principles that govern the linguistic behaviour of participants in LF face-to-face conversations: Firstly, they want to save face, secondly, they want to assure each other of a benevolent attitude.

ELF does not regard morpho-lexical deviations from NL as errors. They are variations. From an English teachers's point of view it is easy to see the 'real-life reason' for, say, a missing third person -s, or a plural marker -s. Björkman (2008) also notes that it is no surprise that L2 speakers sometimes omit the -s. She presents some findings about the Swedish engineering students' ELF, incorrect question formulation being one of them. The speakers, namely, sometimes failed to register that a question was being even asked. Based on how many non-standard usages there are in ELF exchanges in general, one would expect more overt disturbance, but that does not seem to be the case.

It would be interesting to know how much the scholars studying the typical features of ELF pay attention to how grammar or other language components are taught at schools and how that actually **can** affect the kind of language that will be produced by the learners. For example, idiomatic language is not among the first things taught when starting to learn a new language. We start from basic vocabulary and structures, over and over again. This might, in some cases, lead to the learner 'getting stuck' with certain structures. Although fossilization is a much disputed concept in applied linguistics, it seems likely that some of these early and over-learned pieces of language may stabilize or fossilize. On the other hand, from the point of learning, it is probably better if what has already been learned is in "decent order" before new things can be adopted.

I also wonder whether the fact that most people in Finland speak English now affects how we assess the speakers' proficiency levels. We can also ask why all these people who are supposed to have learned the language and school and have access to extensive linguistic input, are still making all these 'errors' or 'mistakes'. Also, it would be interesting to study how the amount of received formal language instruction versus self-initiated learning affects how one relates to 'errors', or how the language usage of these groups differ from each other.

Several studies have shown that it is not the correctness but mutual comprehensibility that is usually of primary importance for successful LF communication (e.g. Knapp and Meierkord 2002:16, Jenkins 2000:9) This study, too, intends to find out whether the participants feel the same and what this means in practice. Is ELF just a communicative tool?

At first glance, it seems obvious that a lot of everyone's energy would be saved if the Finnish speaker of English could be told not to worry too much about the native-like intonation or other 'non-core' features of the NS accent. They could then spend the extra energy on accurate and content-rich language or on more attentive listening. It sometimes seems that those with a lesser language learning background find it easier to accept a more relaxed attitude. They focus on getting their message through and are happy if they succeed. However, those with a deeper knowledge of the language easily hesitate and feel self-conscious about their pronunciation – without any need to do so if ELF scholars are to be believed. "Painting is easy when you don't know how, but very difficult when you do", said Edgar Degas a long time ago. This issue was brought up by Hülmbauer (2007:5):

Irrespective of their explicit claims about its usefulness, the speakers share the opinion that the kind of English they produce is 'flat' and thus deficient in nature. This attitude seems symptomatic.

Jenkins (2007a: 123) describes this phenomenon as 'linguistic schizophrenia' and explains that although the learners' rational mind says yes to ELF and the appropriation of English for their own purposes, they keep searching for arguments to hold on to ENL.

I will now move on to discuss two concepts, accent and idiomaticity, that most NNSEs find problematic in language learning. ELF proponents, however, like to consider them of less importance to language (ELF) competency. Nevertheless, they deserve to be discussed shortly.



## 2.5 Accent

Yule (1996:227) says every language user speaks with an accent, including those with a standard variety of English. Technically, the term *accent* is usually restricted to the description of aspects of pronunciation which identify where an individual speaker is from regionally or socially. Also, it should always be distinguished from the term *dialect*.

Jenkins (2007a: 78) notes that ELF research has shown accents to be even more salient to ELF speakers and hearers than in communication among NSs of English. Nevertheless, most accent attitude studies have been conducted in NS-NS or NS-NNS contexts. Her study on NNS English teachers' attitudes on the English accents showed that UK and US accents were preferred in all respects. However, the NNS respondents' apparent liking for at least some NNS accents and their aesthetic values is taken by her as an encouraging step in accepting ELF accents more widely.(2007: 186)

If learners consider an international English accent satisfactory or, indeed, preferable to traditional national varieties, there would be no point in spending time and energy in pursuit of native-like pronunciation. In fact, Orvomaa (2007) found in his study on the attitudes of Finnish upper secondary school students that the majority of his informants were neutral or close to neutral on whether they prefer a national accent or native-like pronunciation. Furthermore, Orvomaa's study indicated that the students felt confident that a Finnish accent would be understood abroad. This is interesting, for if having a native-like accent is not of major significance, and preference for a non-native accent to native ones seems to be quite common, one could easily argue against the teaching of specific national varieties, and encourage the teaching of an international variety. It would probably boost the confidence of some of the students and reduce any other possible negative effects the use of a national variety as a model may have. However, it must be recognized that for some people the use of native speaker varieties is an encouragement and has a positive effect.

More significantly, what does the teaching of International English (or ELF) phonology comprise of and how would it differ from the present practices? I ask this knowing that ELF scholars do not yet consider ELF as a pedagogical model, but the *Lingua Franca Core*, for example, suggests changes. Naturally, learners must always have choices.

I seek answers to whether accents pose serious problems in ELF working life context and what kind of attitudes the interviewees have to their in-group and out-group NNS accents. Attitudes to different NS accents is beyond the focus of this study.

## 2.6 Idiomaticity

Seidlhofer (2001:136) identifies idiomaticity (i.e. conventionalized language) as one of the areas in which English as a native language and ELF differ. Jenkins (2000:220) argues that the knowledge of idiomatic usage, slang, phrasal verbs, puns, proverbs, cultural allusions and the like are irrelevant if ELF is to succeed as a worldwide lingua franca. It really looks like ELF is thriving without its speakers mastering this wonderful skill that the NSs have in their possession as a birth present.

According to Meierkord (2004:220), unilateral idiomaticity, i.e. when a speaker's idiomatic speech is not understood by others, is a major cause of misunderstanding. Prodromou (2007a:38) sees the status of unilateral idiomaticity, in the discourse of ELF users and whatever their L1, as a rich territory for further research. Prodromou's (2006) studies show that unilateral idiomaticity does not normally cause problems in ELF interactions. I think it is also important to remember that people's receptive language skills are often much better or comprehensive than their productive skills. They might recognize 'intuitively' certain idiomatic expressions, but are still not able to produce them. This also applies in other areas of linguistic skills, and I think part of ELF users 'deviations from standard usage' are due to the fact that a feature has not yet reached the level of active usage.

In an ELF setting the interlocutors do not know what kind of shared knowledge they can assume on the part of the other interlocutors. This is another reason why idiomatic expressions are rarely used: the speakers might face an incident of pragmatic failure and misunderstanding. But as unilateral idiomaticity is rare in ENL it is even rarer in ELF and consequently very difficult to study. In his 200,000 word L2 corpus of ELF spoken interaction Prodromou failed to identify a single instance of it (Prodromou 2007a). It seems that asking for clarification would easily solve unclear situations like this, anyway. In my view, teachers should make sure that they show their students appropriate ways to do this. Strategy instruction in general would seem to be essential for ELF speakers. Problem solving skills as well as interactional competence are welcome characteristics for people working in international business in particular.

Idiomaticity is, no doubt, a particular challenge for the non-native speaker. L2 learners and users often end up sounding dysfluent or unnatural if they try to deploy idiomaticity in their spoken language. However, Erman and Warren (2000) found that as much as 50% of language may be explicable in idiomatic terms. It is problematic if the L2 speaker is to totally ignore this vast chunk of the new language. If idiomaticity becomes 'unnecessary' will ELF speakers be destined to only use so called transparent expressions? As they do not speak in clear transparent phrases in their mother tongue either, this seems like a tough compromise. It is a bit like leaving out the fun part and concentrating merely on productive work. Is there a simple shortcut here? This is something non-native teachers of English would be interested in knowing. Or is there perhaps a special kind of ELF idiomaticity?

Luckily, Prodromou (2007b: 19) takes up an important point: idiomaticity attracts idiomaticity. Thus, if L2 users (or ELF users as a matter of fact) are to take part in the complicated interplay of wordplay and idiomatic allusions, they must be able to **sustain** this kind of interaction across turns and across idiomatic types. But then again, if they are likely to use the language mainly among other non-native speakers, they might not feel an urgent need for this

skill either. Few learners of English really plan their language studies or goals in such an organized way, however.

Also, a non-native speaker's attempts at verbal play are easily misconstrued as linguistic incompetence. They are perceived as an error by the native-speaker interlocutors. (Prodromou 2007b: 20). It seems that this type of language use is not mistake-proof for the L2-user of English as a *lingua franca*, at least in the way it is said to be for the native speaker. In my opinion, the L2 speaker does not seem to have the same right to break the rules, yet. Prodromou (2007b:22) in fact proved this by asking his respondents, whether a certain sentence was correct or not. If the respondents thought that the sentence had been produced by a native speaker they were positive and mostly accepted the sentence. If they were told that a non-native person had produced it, they rejected the sentence more often. Research shows that the process of constructing idiomatic collocation may be more analytic than holistic for the L2-user (Wray 2002: 205-211). Prodromou (2007b: 21) shows that even highly proficient L2-users demonstrate self-consciousness when producing collocations.

For an L1 speaker, however, the years of linguistic immersion cause the expressions to become routinized in everyday discourse. S/he then gains idiomatic competence. (Prodromou 2007b:23) For L2 speakers this is not such an automatic process and this is why lack of idiomaticity may pose a problem for them later on. To show how idiomaticity builds up in real life, I will give an example. This person is telling about the difference between authentic language use and learning a language:

During the five years I spent in London I learned many emotional expressions that I never really cared to translate into Slovenian (I didn't need to) and now they mean much more to me than their Slovenian translations because I experienced the words in real life (go berserk, my petal for "my darling"). I also learned to use the appropriate intonation together with the new words or new meanings, which I had not when I learned and later studied English in Slovenia. (Dewaele, 2007: 153)

As to the English classroom, maybe the teaching of the more frequent idiomatic expressions within a framework of raising language awareness

could partly solve the problem. Also, this would have to take place early enough in the learning process. As idiomatic expressions are hard to remember, a L2 user often tries to produce an L1 expression by deploying an idiomatic expression from their mother tongue and translating it into English. Examples of this can be seen in school essays, for example. In my opinion, these attempts at idiomaticity do not matter too much in ELF interaction, as the NNS interlocutor might be totally unaware of whether these expressions comply to NSE conventions. That is why s/he would not consider the expression a mistake and, if lucky, might even get the meaning of it (of course, depending on whether there was a similar construct in her or his L1). Native speakers would be bewildered, though.

The tendency for idiomatic phenomena to appear in networks rather than in single one-off occurrences (Prodromou 2007b:23) seems to me to be one of the reasons why ELF speakers do not develop in this linguistic skill the way natives do. They simply do not get the input in the same amount. Effective users of ELF are said to keep away from the “idiomatic minefields” (McCarthy and Carter 1994: 109). They know their limitations. In other words, successful users of English (SUEs) can be defined in terms of what they **do not do** as well as by things they do. This suggests that perhaps idiomatic deficit is, after all, a constructive response to the limits of one’s own competence (Prodromou 2007a: 38) It is a matter of attitude as well. To what extent do ELF speakers consider themselves learners of English and not competent users of their own variety of English particularly because of lack of idiomaticity? I think this is an intriguing question.

What is superfluous, or too idiomatic, when it comes to teaching English? Modiano (2003:36) emphasizes the importance of accommodating the use of English as a lingua franca in cross-cultural communication. For example, he lists culture-specific vocabulary often taught to students in Sweden. These include words like *brilliant* (BrE) for *good*, *later* (AmE) for *goodbye* and *mellow out* for *calm down*. He considers these culture-specific lexical choices which have little communicative relevance and thus, are not necessary to learn. But

the teacher may face a problem here: this is exactly what especially young people seek out to learn. Perhaps some of them really “...aspire to be perceived as an auxiliary member of a NS community” as Modiano (2003: 36) puts it. Some people might not simply feel the need to ‘represent their own cultural and social identities’ (ibid: 36), at least not through their English. Another problem is how one should relate to multi-word units the NNSs use which are not ‘proper ‘English’. These phrases, while not familiar to native speakers, make perfect sense to NNSs. For example, a Swede or a Finn could say: He is so *blue-eyed*, meaning *naïve*. Or they could use an expression *plus minus zero* to describe a not-so-good result. In the school environment (or any learning environment for that matter) the teacher will have to take a standing here. Is this OK or not? I would like to argue that students want to know in which contexts their expression would be understood. In my experience, learners appreciate clear and unambiguous answers and solutions. Flexibility is welcome, but the realities of English classrooms pose some problems to.

The Russian literary theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin’s words console advanced language learners struggling with ‘collocations in use and similar complexities’:

Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated—over-populated—with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process (Bakhtin 1981: 294).

Idiomaticity (or the lack of it) is not the main interest of my study and thus no questions about it will be asked in the interview, but I expect it to be mentioned in the comments of the interviewees. I will now move on to discuss the concept of a native speaker of a language that has received a lot of criticism of late. However, native speaker model is still the norm for too many language learners.

## 2.7 Defining a native speaker

Most people can speak effortlessly in his or her mother tongue. Davies (2003: 213) suggests that the only possible operational definition of the native speaker concept is that “to be a native speaker means not to be a non-native speaker”. It is easier to define a non-native speaker than a native speaker.

Researchers from different schools of thought agree that being a native speaker is a matter of self-ascription as well as a matter of objective definition. Above all, the concept is full of ambiguity. “Bilingual native speakers are possible in terms of linguistic competence but not in terms of communicative competence” says Davies (2003:80). Even native speakers differ among each other in terms of their communicative competence; they are non-uniform, he says. This is often forgotten when referring to NSs as linguistic models. Communication among native speakers themselves is often incomplete and ambiguous and misinterpretations occur (Coupland et al. 1991). Does this give us a right to regard some of the native speakers as L1 learners, in the same way Jenkins (2007) and other ELF scholars have claimed we now do with ELF speakers? In fact Davies (2003:169) in part confirms this by arguing that not every native speaker is a perfect speaker of the standard language and only a minority achieves very high command of the language.

Many native English speakers are also bi-dialectal: speaking their local native English side-by-side with a more standard variety. Davies also points out that there is the **ideal native speaker** and the **human native speaker** and the native speaker is mainly a sociolinguistic concept. One of the attributes of a native speaker is that s/he is expected to intuitively ‘know’ another native speaker. Another ‘knowledge’ of a native speaker, according to Davies, is the ability to create potential additions to language. I think this is an interesting comment in light of ELF scholars views as they like to entitle an ELF speaker to add their own words and grammatical forms into their English (as a lingua franca). This would, according to them, make them ‘the owners of the language’ by the side of native speakers. Would this right also make them

native speakers of ELF, so to say? This line of thinking has been supported by Davies (2003).

Following Davies' argumentation, it is up to the individual to decide which language s/he wants to be a native speaker of. However, he says that "you are a native speaker if you speak a standard language" (p.65). If ELF varieties were to be standardized based on corpora, LFC etc., could we then say its speakers are native speakers of ELF? As Davies (p.57) says, "the speech community is primarily built on the attitudes of its members". Cook (2002) takes a different standing by claiming that one can never be a native speaker of a second language and the best one can aim for is to become bilingual. Perhaps there is a need to develop an operational definition of minimal native-speaker ability to clear up the present situation, Davies (ibid.) concludes.

As it is, some scholars would like to leave the terms native/non-native speaker behind. Prodromou, for example, suggests it is better to speak about L1 and L2 users (Prodromou 2008: 163). Also, Schell (2005:125) suggests we should eliminate sloppy terms like 'near-native'. They reinforce the notion of superiority/inferiority although they were probably constructed for the purpose of getting rid of this old dichotomy. To complicate matters, he claims even the vague 'almost L1' should be either clarified or retired, as it would contribute to the legitimization of new varieties. In addition, he proposes the term *colingual* as a useful sociolinguistic concept (2005: 95), referring to people who share an L1 but speak L2 English with each other. The respondents in my study, for example, would be colinguals.

However, it sometimes feels the terminology used is like a minefield and the use of a 'wrong' term can lead to fierce debates among linguistics. Also, which should we change first, terminology or attitudes?



### 2.7.1 The native speaker as an interlocutor and a model

The perpetuation of the native/non-native distinction is a fact. Change is underway, though. Kachru (2005:18, 250) argues forcefully that the “native speaker” is a myth. To understand the concept of ELF, however, we also need to understand its relationship to the native speaker concept. First, I would like to emphasize that the so called native accents are often considered the most unintelligible by non-native speakers of English (Jenkins 2008b). Bent and Bradlow (2003) also reported that non-native listeners find L2 speech more intelligible than native speech, contrary to native listeners. It seems that this concerns not only phonological features of English, but also the lexicogrammatical level: the idiomaticity and complicated sentence structures may be an obstacle for NNSs. However, the findings of Björkman’s (2008:40) study show that non-native-like usage in question formulation in fact caused overt disturbance, i.e. miscommunication, even among ELF speakers in academic setting. This suggests that certain features are more critical than others, as regards comprehensibility, and that is exactly what Jenkins’ LFC is focused on, for the part of English phonology.

Holliday (2005, 2008) condemns the native speaker concept as an absurdly simplistic notion. All users of English can claim ownership of this language, he says (2008: 119). But abolishing native speaker and non-native speaker terms in Britain, at least, seems impossible because of the claimed ‘customer demand’ for them. Holliday does not see this as a valid excuse though, as in his opinion we have to educate our customers, and language professionals should not concentrate on short term goals like satisfying customer demand. Nevertheless, the native speaker concept forms a part of the bedrock of ELT and the concept has proved to be extremely resilient. The traditional ENL/ESL/EFL distinction leads to a misunderstanding about the term ‘native language’, he says. If the people in ENL countries are described as native speakers, people easily think that their variety is one and the same standard variety and spoken by all of those people. Consequently, this variety is also seen as the only suitable model for people in other countries to

follow (Kirkpatrick 2007: 28). Also, native speakerism as a notion implies that the non-native speaker is, somehow, in need of cultural change (Holliday 2008:123).

The situation is not simple as there are varieties even within ENL. Curiously, Trudgill (2002) describes, for example, the East Anglian variety of English where the present tense third person *-s* is missing! English teachers in Finland never use this as an example of native speaker usage. Davies (2003:180) claims English is becoming a language family and this challenges the role of the native speaker as a standard:

SLA research has always been more interested in **the native speaker** than in **language proficiency**. In particular it has compared native-speaker behaviour and that of various second language learners, asking the question: What does the second language learner know and to what extent does this differ from what the native speaker knows? (Davies 2003:180, emphasis added)

To sum up, a fundamental concern of SLA research then, seems to have been whether or not L2 learners can achieve linguistic competence that is (almost) indistinguishable from that of a native speaker. This persistent over-use of the concept of native speaker as a pedagogic reference point has been discussed and critiqued over the years by many scholars (see Leung 2005). In fact there is an established critical tradition which views native speakers as an obstacle to the development of English as an International Language (Holliday 2007). English belongs to all, and local contexts of use become the norm, he says. Native speakerdom also causes cultural chauvinism in TESOL, says Holliday, implying that 'a culturally problematic other' (i.e. NNS students and teachers) are viewed from the point of view of the 'unproblematic self' (i.e. NS students and teachers) (Holliday 2005:19). Lakshmanan (in Han 2006) comes out with some provocative thoughts about monolingual native speaker bias in second language acquisition studies and argues for replacing native speaker norms with simultaneous bilingual speaker norms. After all, most educated speakers of other languages are at least bilingual. This is known as 'English-knowing bilingualism' in Jenkins'

writing. (2003:141). Nevertheless, learners are mostly being measured against an unrealistic 'native' standard that might one day prove irrelevant. We just need a real life alternative.

A native speaker as an interlocutor in NNS-NS interaction is more problematic to the NNS one. Nerriere (2004) suggests there is a potential Anglophone communicative inadequacy. He says they have to learn how to re-phrase and amplify what they have to say. Also, they need to simplify and monitor their own and others' cultural presumptions. The things that cause the most problems are vast vocabularies, complex idiosyncratic structures and idiomatic and figurative styles that derive from local cultural references. More generally, it seems reasonable to think that a world language like English must be prepared to pay a price for its success around the world. Thus, the native speakers have to submit to various kinds of use of English even though that might be attitudinally challenging to some. Modiano (2000: 30-34) emphasizes that all speakers must be on equal footing in lingua franca situations. He means that native speakers, who are not able to speak a form of EIL should **not** be treated differently from non-native speakers in the same situation. VanParijs sends a metaphoric plea to the NSEs:

To put it metaphorically: when it is in everyone's interest that one should always meet in the same place, it is fair that those who never need to do any travelling should be charged part of the travelling expenses. If they cannot feasibly or conveniently be charged, they can fairly be expected to compensate by offering dinner. And if they do not bother, the others are entitled to help themselves on their shelves. (VanParijs 2007:82)

One of the insights in the English Next research into global ELT trends by Graddol in 2006 was that, it is the monoglot native English speaker who will be at a competitive disadvantage in this increasingly polyglot world. The winners are the foreigners because they have been forced to adapt.

## **2.8 Communicative competence**

As McKay (2003:3) claims, and as discussed above, traditional ELT pedagogy has generally assumed that "the ultimate goal of English language learners is

to achieve native-like competence in the language". The communicative competence model, developed by Canale and Swain (1980), is based on the development of four native speakers' competences - grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. It has been advocated as an appropriate framework for Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). However, the notion of communicative competence has been criticized as being "utopian, unrealistic, and constraining" (Alptekin 2002: 57-64; Byram 1997). It is naturally difficult to define how many or what kind of differences to the native standards can occur before comprehension is seriously impeded. Jenkins' much discussed Lingua Franca Core (LFC) attempts to describe this issue in detail and gives guidelines as to what the most significant features are as regards pronunciation.

Penny Ur (2008) defines a good English speaker as follows:

So the good speaker of English today is...Someone who has full mastery of the lexical and grammatical forms of an internationally accepted variety of the language, and a clear and easily comprehensible accent; who has intercultural competence and well-developed communication skills. It doesn't really matter any more whether such a person is, or was, originally a 'native' speaker of one of the English dialects.

Meta-communicative competence, on the other hand, is defined as "the ability to intervene within difficult conversations and to correct communication problems by utilizing the different ways of practical communication, including verbal, paraverbal, nonverbal and extraverbal communication" (Mader). In several studies the language proficiency of Finns has been shown to lack communicative competence (Huhta 1999:12, Määttä 2005, Lehtonen 2004: 94). Meta-communicative competence is obviously an essential skill for an ELF speaker, too. Discourse strategies like compensation, avoidance, and repair deserve thus more room in the language curriculum. Developing one's own, personal strategies is important, as worldwide language usage conventions exist only in certain specialized fields. It is not wise for a language learner to rely on some sort of

ready-made repertoire of suitable expressions, although one may get that impression when looking at some English textbooks.

Communicative competence is regarded as an essential part of professional competence. The functionality of language is often regarded as more important than error free expressions or correctness. Employee language skills can be inadequate, adequate or perhaps even too good in relation to goals and the actual situations in which the language is used. In working life, good language skills are considered to be much the same as good communication skills, comprising the ability to deeper interaction, creation of trust and the development of persistent cooperation. (Huhta 2006)

Communicative competence in ELF is a less researched area. Most of the studies have been conducted around ENL or EFL interaction. The conventional model of communicative competence with its native speaker target norms fails to reflect cross-cultural ELF settings, Alptekin (2002: 60-63) claims. However, CC in a more comprehensive sense may be an even more significant factor in ELF exchanges than in ENL exchanges. Seidlhofer (2005: 340) argues that if learners strive at mastering the finer nuances of language it might even be counterproductive in ELF settings. Of course, it matters what is meant by the finer nuances. I attempt to look into how the participants in my study interpret communicative competence in ELF contexts.

## **2.9 Intercultural communication/competence**

It can be assumed that about 80% of interaction, in which English is used as a foreign or second language, takes place without native speakers. (Beneke 1991, as cited in Seidlhofer 2003b:7). Kramsch (2001: 205) reminds teachers who teach English to speakers of other languages about the fact that intercultural communication will have to deal with “shifting identities and cross-cultural networks rather than with autonomous individuals located in stable and homogeneous national cultures”. Originally, intercultural

communication has its roots in the very pragmatic need of companies to function internationally. This is why there is a demand for intercultural training as well.

Competence in intercultural communication has been a buzzword in business training for some time now. Everyone wants it, but teachers do not always know what to teach the students. The increasing connections between nations have brought them closer to each other and it looks like professional people might have a 'global' identity as well. They like to see the similarities between people from around the world, rather than differences. In other words, they see unity in diversity. People are not just representatives of their own culture but individuals.

Geert Hofstede (2005) conducted research on IBM employees around the world, developing a classic systematization of culture dimensions in 1980. Initially he detected four dimensions of culture and added later the fifth one. These dimensions are said to relate with certain behaviour characteristics in people in the following way.

- power distance - greater hierarchy
- uncertainty avoidance - greater formality in relationship
- individualism (versus collectivism) - greater superficiality
- masculinity (versus femininity) - greater task-orientation
- orientation in time (long-term or short-term) - greater competitiveness

How do these relate to ELF interactions in the world? It is essential in business world, for example, to acknowledge cultural differences, but a learner of English (or ELF user) cannot be expected to know or adopt all cultural underpinnings. ELF interaction now takes place in innumerable contexts, and it is difficult for the participants to know whose cultural norms should be followed. On the other hand, there is probably a common and more neutral, global culture developing, and this might be partly due to the common language, ELF. It is a give and take situation: no one culture can expect to dictate the rules at language level or otherwise any more.

## 2.10 Intelligibility/comprehensibility/interpretability

I now go on to discuss a few concepts that are necessary when discussing the quality of language usages. These are intelligibility, comprehensibility and interpretability.

Smith (1992: 76) says it is unnecessary for every user of English to be intelligible to every other user of English. A person in India may manage in her surroundings even if people in Finland did not understand his or her English. But if we look at today's business world or educational institutions, we realize the interconnections now are so varied and numerous that one needs to be intelligible to quite a few nationalities. It is not about with whom we **wish** to communicate (as Smith 1992 suggests), it is with whom we **must be able** to communicate.

Smith and Nelson (1985) define intelligibility, comprehensibility and interpretability as follows. Intelligibility is the ability of the listener to recognize individual words or utterances; comprehensibility is the listener's ability to understand the meaning of the word or utterance in its given context and interpretability is the ability of the listener to understand the speaker's intentions behind the word or utterance. However, Jenkins (2000), among others claims that there is no universally agreed upon definition of these constructs. It is even more difficult to measure these phenomena. Researchers (Duranti 1986 and Gumperz 1992 as cited in Pickering 2006: 221) see comprehensibility as a relative standard and argue that it is always co-constructed. Interpretability is perhaps the hardest to reach in ELF contexts.

It has been argued that certain varieties of English are even different languages because they can be mutually unintelligible. Kirkpatrick (2007:13) does not share this view, but instead considers intelligibility an unreliable criterion particularly because there are, in fact, a lot of broad varieties of British English that are incomprehensible to speakers of other varieties. From the point of view of ELF and WE research, comprehensibility studies

have seemed to privilege inner circle speakers and listeners. NS judgments of outer and expanding circle speakers have prevailed (Jenkins, 2002: SIVU). That is why these constructs need to be considered more widely and more research on NNS-NNS comprehensibility is welcome.

Familiarity with the topic and familiarity with the language variety seems to result in people believing that they understand most of what they hear. (Smith 1992) As far as I understand, communities of practice (CoP) in corporations, dealing mostly with quite specific topics, are likely to feel at ease with these subject matters in a frequently met variety of ELF as well as in their mother tongue. Also, familiarity with several different English varieties makes it easier to deal with cross-cultural communication.

“You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours” mentality may play a role in intelligibility and comprehensibility issues. In this respect, interaction is very much co-constructed. One is willing to facilitate communication if the interlocutor does the same. Firth (1996) analyzed a corpus of telephone calls from two Danish companies. Only non-native speakers of English were involved. He notes (p.255) people’s extraordinary ability to make sense of what is being said. To explain the strategies of these speakers he comes up with “Let-it-pass” - principle (p. 243). If the participants in the discussion are unsure of what the other speaker means, they will, instead of seeking immediate clarification, let it pass in the expectation that the meaning will become clear or redundant as talk progresses. He also discovers a “make-it-normal” -principle. A speaker may even use the word that s/he did not understand in the interlocutor’s speech to make it sound correct or perhaps, to save the face of the other speaker (p. 245). In his later article (2009, 140-141), Firth additionally describes another method used in ELF interaction. He calls it ‘flagging for markedness’. This takes place by indicating in indirect ways (hesitation markers, self-repair etc.) that one’s own usage may be marked or unidiomatic. Meierkord (2000) also argues that in ELF interaction there are plenty of attempts to preserve the face of all participants and assure



each other of a general benevolent attitude. All this certainly contributes to comprehensibility, intelligibility and interpretability.

Prodromou (2007a:37) argues that in ELF interactions there is an 'I-just-ask-if-I don't-understand' -principle, in addition to the 'let-it-pass' -principle. However, it would be interesting to study whether there are differences between ELF speakers from different cultural backgrounds in applying this principle. Finns have been known to be shy to ask questions, so maybe this is worth studying in the future. Nevertheless, according to (Kirkpatrick, 2007) multilingual people are particularly skilful in their use of English when communicating across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Localised usage that might cause intelligibility problems for some, are somehow edited in their minds.

There are other terms for describing the \*quality' of language usage as well. Kachru (2005), for example, argues that *acceptability* is a broader and more useful term than *correctness*, particularly for intranational communication and localized uses of English (such as might occur among the dockworkers who service the cargo ship). It is my intention to ask the subjects in my study a few questions about the comprehensibility of ELF speakers as well.

## **2.11 Language and identity**

The traditional view of language-related identity assumes that individuals with a particular nationality speak a certain language and represent that culture. The social reality of speakers is different, however, and language identity is not that one-dimensional. They can be loyal to multiple cultures and groups. For example work affiliations can present a large language variety. Membership within discourse communities, such as belonging to a particular level of employment in a hierarchical business organization, or being a member of a business interest group or a participant at a training programme, also confers a type of identity, says Nair-Venugopal (2003: 207). (Berns 2008: 8-9) suggests that English can function as an expression of

European culture and a means of expressing Europeanness if one takes it and molds it to his or her own needs. Scholars (e.g. Kachru 1992) have attempted to make the notion of identities clearer and have further attempted to tie it to language learning. Gass et al (2007:793) claim a certain identity can, if necessary, be backgrounded: “An academic may very well be a tennis player or a parent, but when giving a plenary at a conference, his or her identity of tennis player or parent is backgrounded and, in most instances, does not surface at all.” An NNSE might, in the same way, background his or her L1 identity when speaking English to blend in more easily.

Language identity also includes the learner – user continuum. In ELF research the question of whether a NNS of English is regarded a language learner or a language user seems to be a key issue. Jenkins (e.g. 2007a) would like ELF speakers to be considered users of English, not learners. She feels the learner status is downgrading and unnecessarily emphasizes the superiority of the native speaker of English. However, I think most Finnish ELF speakers are in fact learners of the language in the sense that they aspire to improve their English, and some work hard to achieve their goals – even if they simultaneously use it quite professionally. There might be cultural differences here: in Finland language learning is so common that it might be difficult to see anything downgrading in **being** a learner. In my study I attempt to find out whether the respondents acknowledge separate learner/user identities.

## **2.12 Fossilization and stabilization**

In trying to find out why, most of the time, we are not able to acquire a native-like fluency in a foreign language, many explanations have emerged. Contrastive linguistics has explained it in terms of transfer or interference from one’s native language. Another way to explain the phenomenon is called fossilization and/or stabilization. Han (2008) claims instruction may partly hinder learning: teachers can use strategies that are counter-

productive to learning, the input is impoverished, emphasis on certain forms is selective, and there are limited opportunities for communicative practice.

As early as 1972, Selinker noted that one unresolved question in second language acquisition is why certain morphosyntactic properties of stable grammars diverge from native forms despite continuous exposure to target input. He named the phenomenon 'fossilization' (Selinker, 1972). He means that non-target forms become fixed in the interlanguage. Fossilization may affect only certain structures.

Fossilizable linguistic phenomena are linguistic items, rules and subsystems which speakers of a particular NL will tend to keep in their IL relative to a particular TL, no matter what the age of the learner or amount of explanation and instruction he receives in the TL (Selinker 1972: 215).

Consequently, it is possible that a student continues to make progress in certain areas, but keeps making the same mistake again and again. Chomsky's (1986) term for the fact that some (in fact, most; writer's remark) learners do not seem to be able to achieve native-like representations despite the availability of rich linguistic input, was 'Orwell's Problem'. He contrasts this with the observation that children manage to acquire target forms successfully in first language acquisition despite the poverty of stimulus.

Hundreds of studies of fossilization have emerged during the past three decades. Two competing views seem to prevail in the studies: the success-driven view (everything is learnable) and the failure-driven view (everything in L2 is not learnable). Birdsong (2005) represents the former, Han (2006) the latter. Both sides agree on two important points, i.e. that there is neither complete success nor complete failure in SLA, and that both positions are not mutually exclusive, but complementary, as "both are needed to produce a complete picture of the L2 learner" (Birdsong 2005: 185).

Han (2006) has studied fossilization in depth. Are second language learners able to become as proficient and native-like in their L2 as in their L1? This is a question that remains to be answered. However, there are opposing voices who strictly deny the existence of fossilization and some practitioners even seem

to suffer of fossilophobia (VanPatten 1988). There is also a definition problem. Scholars have described fossilization as a process (explanans) and a product (explanandum). This, according to some researchers (Long 2005), confuses the research results. However, Han (Han and Odlin 2006: 5) reminds that it is hard to avoid ambiguity when English is used as the metalanguage to discuss theoretical issues. In ELF research, the same kind of problem seems to exist when defining ELF as both **form** and **function**.

Nakuma (2006) seeks to reconceptualize fossilization and attrition as assumptions or hypotheses about learner behaviors and learning outcomes and reminds us that “not all issues need to be proven empirically in order to influence human existence” (2006: 31). Han (2003) emphasizes that we should not underestimate the effect of fossilization as an L2 user might remain “stuck” for years on a plateau below native speaker norm. Han, of course, contrary to ELF proponents, has the presupposition that L2 users see the native speaker as the ultimate target. Personally, I welcome these competing views in order to evoke discussion.

Scholars have been trying to find out how fossilization can be prevented. Selinker introduces the “attention to other form” hypothesis (2006:208), which suggests that turning the L2 learner’s attention away from core grammatical forms and onto non-core peripheral forms can lead to the automatization of core forms, thereby forestalling and possibly avoiding the potential for fossilization. Again, it would be enlightening to see empirical proof of this. It sounds like practising basic grammar year after year is harmful for learning if Selinker is right. Tarone (2006) endorses language play as a means to prevent and possibly destabilize fossilized interlanguage forms, even though she admits that evidence supporting the effectiveness of such an approach is largely suggestive. She observes that SLA researchers can expect to encounter real problems in trying to isolate the putative causes of fossilization in adult subjects, whose lives get more complex over time. This is considered an argument for a more socio-psychological approach to SLA research.

Acquisition is said (ibid.) to proceed in three phases, namely form, form-meaning and form-meaning-function. Fossilization can occur in all these phases and the acquisition of the unity of form-meaning-function is the most difficult (see Figure 4).

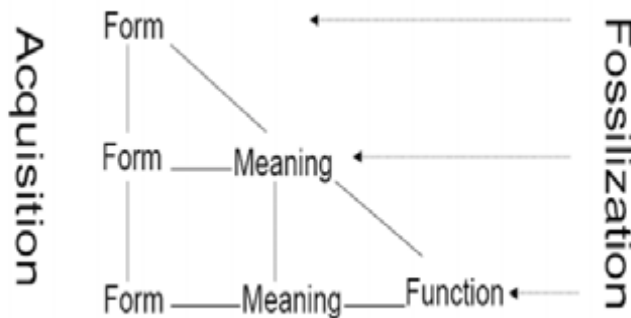


Figure 4 The units of fossilization ( Han 2008: 4)

Han has come to the conclusion that fossilization does not happen in EFL:

...it should be clear that fossilization cannot happen in foreign language learning, due to the fact that two of the three criteria, (a) rich exposure to input and (b) plentiful opportunity for communicative practice, are not met in this environment.

...However, what can happen in the foreign language environment is stabilization. Yet, as noted earlier, there are multiple types of stabilization, only one of which can be a prelude to fossilization." (Han, 2006: 4-5)

Stabilization, then, is a more widely accepted concept than fossilization.

Perhaps this is so as it is easier to prove empirically, even though longitudinal research is needed. According to Han, (2008: 3), three types of stabilization can be differentiated:

- Natural slowdown
- Interlanguage (IL) restructuring
- Long-term cessation of IL development

How much does this explain the 'deficient' language usage in working life? Can fossilization/stabilization take place in ELF working life contexts, or is this an impossible question? There is an ELF -rich environment in multicultural corporations, at least and plenty of opportunities for communication practice. According to Han, language instruction itself can

contribute to stabilization and fossilization. Rethinking of pedagogic strategies might thus be timely.

Research has provided abundant evidence suggesting that lack of opportunity for output practice is hurtful not only to acquisition of grammatical competence, but also to sociolinguistic competence (see e.g., Tarone & Swain, 1995). Language classroom discourse with its tendency to be one at a time, may also affect the kind of English the learners will use later. Sociobiographical variables like context of acquisition (instructed, mixed or naturalistic), age of onset of the L2, typological distance between L1 and English, frequency of use, gender, age, education level and so on: all this must have an effect on one's linguistic development.

Having accounted for the theoretical basis of fossilization and stabilization, I move on to everyday practice. A lot of teachers' and language trainers' time is spent on correcting errors or mistakes that often look like L1 affected 'fossilized' errors or common errors in grammar like the present tense third person -s. Now that empirical research into features of ELF suggests that these can be considered acceptable features of ELF rather than errors, what kind of feedback should be given to learners? Do teachers keep on "lavishing red ink on 'errors' without further reflection" or should we "begin looking at the way in which L2 speakers enrich the tongue by transferring features of their L1 into the English language" (cf. Modiano 2003: 40) In other words: Can an EFL learner be an ELF user at the same time? Also, are EFL teachers able to become ELF teachers when needed? Hülmbauer et al. (2008: 28) answer my question by saying:

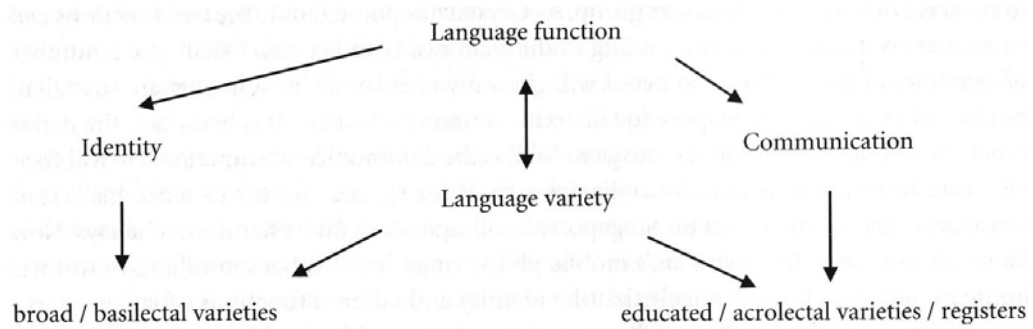
According to this conceptualization, then, it is possible for one person to be in the position of an ELF user at one moment and of an EFL user at another moment, depending on who he or she is speaking to and for what purpose.

As argued before, fossilization, like ELF, is still a much disputed issue and we are left with a more questions than answers. However, healthy debate can benefit language teaching practices in the future.

### 2.13 Attitudes to varieties of English

Any variety of English itself comprises a number of varieties. There is not some form of fixed standard of a language that everyone who speaks the language always uses in exactly the same way (Kirkpatrick 2007: 12) There is variety at an individual level as well. Sometimes the used variety is affected by the interlocutor's variety. In fact, all language is characterised by variation. Jenkins (2007a) has conducted an extensive study on English teacher attitudes to varieties of English and found out that the NSE is still the main model for them.

I intend to study the attitudes of the respondents in my study to different varieties of English. Moreover, it will be interesting to hear whether they feel they themselves are able to use more than one variety of English and how much the interlocutor's accent affects their own usage. If this is the case it is a surprising finding, as I feel that most Finns have their own static way of speaking English - a variety of one's own. Kirkpatrick suggests a tool for explaining how a language serves different functions (communication, identity and culture), the 'identity-communication continuum' (see Figure 5). He claims it can explain why ELF, when used for international communication, is likely to display relatively little variation, while in localised use it is likely to show more variation (Kirkpatrick 2007: 169)



*Figure 5* The identity-communication continuum (Kirkpatrick 2007: 12)

Do the NSs use a certain variety in reaction to the language of NNSs? At least there is 'foreigner talk', meaning the kind of simplistic talk to a NNS by a NS. And perhaps a NNS sometimes shows too strong a cultural identity in situations where a more standard variety would be more appropriate. Kirkpatrick notes that sometimes using a certain variety is deliberate, like when teenagers do not want adults to understand them. (Kirkpatrick 2007: 12)



## 3 RESEARCH DESIGN

### 3.1 Research questions

Latest ELF research suggests that competent NNS English speakers, like the people in my study, should not be seen as FL learners but ELF users (e.g. Firth and Wagner 1997, 1998 and Jenkins 2007a). Do these learners juggle their roles or do they really feel they are legitimate users of the English language or ELF - or learners forever? One's attitudes affect learning so this is an important question from the point of language training as well. Existence of multiple roles might explain partly how they learn. Perhaps ways of instruction or models given need to change? Perhaps the focus should be put on the teachers' attitudes? What does it mean in practise if we consider NNS English speakers of ELF users and not just learners of English?

These are some of the background questions that I had in mind when thinking of my aims for this study. I wanted to find out how the employees of a global enterprise that use English daily at their work really see themselves as English speakers and/or learners. Today, with English as a lingua franca being the main vehicle in global business, it is essential to know what the actual practitioners think, i.e. to get the emic view. The main focus in the study was in attitudes and identities as they mirror the respondents' innermost feelings. I wanted to find answers to the following questions:

- 1) What is the participants' linguistic target at present (if any) and what is their attitude to the present stage of their English. Do they have a linguistic model in mind and what is it like?
- 2) Do the interviewees identify themselves predominantly as English/ELF users or English/ELF learners (or perhaps this is a non-essential issue for them)?

- 3) What is their attitude towards different NS / NNS varieties of English (in the workplace setting)?
- 4) Do they feel there is “an ELF” and is there an ELF identity in themselves?

Answering these questions entailed questions about the participants’ background, feelings, attitudes, problems and wishes. I analyzed their replies and self-initiated descriptions in order to answer the questions to the extent it was possible in this limited study.

### 3.2 Data

The data for this study came from four semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted among the employees of a globally operating enterprise, with English as its official corporate working language. Interview data were gathered from four people from two offices of CompanyA. The interviewees volunteered to be interviewed after having received a request from inside the company or from me. The interviews were conducted in Finnish as it was expected to be easier for the participants to express themselves in their mother tongue in affective issues like this and their answers would be more explicit. However, all the interview extracts in the study have been translated into English; the original interview extracts can be found in the appendices (see Appendix 2). The interviews were conducted at the interviewees’ workplaces during their work day. It is also worth mentioning that I have been teaching one of the interviewees for a little while.

The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed later. All respondents got a chance to familiarize themselves with the general themes of the interview one day before the interview. Due to the nature of semi-structured interview, the discussions produced a lot of talk and information. Thus, it was impossible for me to deal with all the issues that came up. However, getting a quite thorough picture of the interviewees’ “language

world” actually helped me in finding the answers to my research questions. For my purposes it was more important to get a few in-depth interviews than a lot of superficial information from a larger number of respondents.

A pilot interview was conducted, but as the questions remained the same in the actual interviews except a minor change concerning a question about the interviewee’s language background, this interview was included in the data.

The interview consisted of six themes and auxiliary questions that were dealt with flexibly in free discussion. I also asked some questions about the respondents’ background, concerning the subjects’ age, length of career, and language learning history, but as the research group is so small, I will not identify the interviewees by any of these pieces of information.

As I did not want the concept of ELF affect the nature of the whole interview too much, I only presented the concept and a short summary of latest ELF research before my last interview questions to the interviewees, letting them comment on ELF issues and whatever came to their mind after getting a new point of view to the subject.

### **3.3 The subjects**

The interviewees are employees at a large multinational company with its headquarters in Finland and with English as its corporate language. English surrounds them at work and some have participated in language courses offered by their present employer. They are 30 to 45 years of age and there were representatives from both genders. They work at the Helsinki and Tampere offices of the company, all with different job descriptions. They are also so called instructed language learners, i.e. they have first acquired their language skills through language instruction at school and language courses.

### 3.4 Methods of analysis

Altogether almost six hours of interview data were transcribed in this qualitative study and the transcriptions served as the basis for analysis in my study. Interviewing offered the kind of flexibility that was needed to get information concerning the participants' identity as a speaker of English. The topics might have been unfamiliar to the subjects and the method enabled me to accommodate the interviewees when necessary. The theme interview method provided me with a lot of data for me to interpret, but of course, also left the possibility of misinterpretation. It was difficult to predict which questions would best motivate the subjects to open up and a questionnaire would thus have been problematic in this regard.

The answers were based solely on the personal experiences of the interviewees. They were able to expand on the topic wherever they felt so. Also, personal interviews enable the researcher to see extralinguistic features like the interviewees' body language, which facilitates the interpretation of the answers. In my study I only comment on obvious extralinguistic features, for example laughter. Those features were indicated in the selected interview extracts as well. It was predicted that some of the answers would need some clarification from my part so I expanded on most answers.

Because of the restricted nature of this study the number of interviewees had to be small and they can not be said to represent the whole community of practice. Also, what the subjects said was only their perception of what is happening, but that was enough for the purposes of this study. I believe, however, that the answers of my interviewees represent the thoughts of quite a few of the employees in CompanyA, at least to some extent. However, it would be interesting to observe the same group of people on the job in the future to get an inside view of their performance in addition to their own perceptions. It was challenging to operationalize the research questions, but I hope I succeeded sufficiently. As I had been working as a language trainer for CompanyA employees before, I was somewhat familiar with the

situations they talked about and this, I think, guaranteed the concept validity of my study.

## 4 RESULTS

It was my intention to hear how my subjects, English as L2 speakers who regularly interact in various ELF contexts at work, see themselves as speakers of English and what kind of attitudes they hold towards NNS and NS varieties of English. I will describe the results under five themes that I thought were the most meaningful in answering my research questions. To improve the readability of this study I give the selected interview extracts in English. The original wordings in Finnish can be found in Appendix 2.

### 4.1 Proficiency level

To lay some ground for other questions I wanted to find out how the subjects feel about their English skills in general. The interviewees seemed to be quite satisfied with their English skills, although all could name things they wanted to improve on. When asked to describe their skills freely, most told me their proficiency is something between fairly good to fluent. Only one of the interviewees was able to quickly and easily pick her skill level on a continuum, others found it a little problematic. Notably, one respondent informed me right away: "I am not at native speaker level, for sure."

All in all, judging one's competencies did not seem easy. Most felt they can cope fairly well in work setting, but problems might arise elsewhere, in social conversation and everyday places like shops etc. Competence in English was considered of major importance. One's competency in English even affects one's opportunities in making a career. Those who are fluent in English are known to be given a chance to perform on forums that are unreachable for less skilled persons. Also, those forums function as learning environments for the employees. On the other hand, "being fluent" was said to be a very unclear notion within the company. One person said it often means in their company: "you are understood by others and use the correct terminology".

Moreover, one can be fluent in English with Finns, for example, but not with people from India.

(1) Perhaps, because I have gotten better (at English) I have been given a chance to speak on such forums...and I have had the courage to open my mouth...and this way, it can affect my career and actually turns out to be a more significant factor than I thought it was. (P3)

On the other hand, one of the interviewees emphasized the fact that it is not the quality of English in itself that matters, but the ability to express whatever needs to be said. What exactly was meant by this was that partly deficient language skills do not always matter so much, after all.

(2) Well, I don't think there are any special criteria for that, you just have to be able to express your ideas so that there is nothing unclear and you should not have any irritating manners. And your bag of expressions must be large enough, not too limited, so that you can express yourself a little more vividly. (P1)

When asked what a good English speaker is like, the respondents listed characteristics like: expresses oneself accurately, does not have irritating manners, has a wide vocabulary, correct spelling, is able to voice nuances etc. A competent English speaker must have quite advanced skills, it seems. The importance of explicitness was emphasized by several of respondents.

Insufficient language skills were described mostly in terms of unintelligibility, heavy accent, deficient or erroneous vocabulary, inaccuracy, too flat language usage, inability to accommodate, but also NSs' incomprehensible local accents were mentioned. Unintelligibility was said to be caused mainly by a very strong foreign accent that makes English sound more like one's L1.

It was mentioned that the problems in the English language often appear in other surroundings than work. This was somewhat surprising as one would think the English used in this sector of industry is quite challenging. But it seems practice makes a master; frequently met tasks and situations remain in one's memory and they become easier with time.

(3) In work situations the topics are more restricted. That is, when you talk straight business there are no real problems there. But if you start talking about

this and that, that is when the linguistic restrictions turn up. For example, I'm not able to talk about the everyday things so well, because I have never lived the everyday life in an English speaking country. (P1)

Communication in general was quite unproblematic – work gets done. However, it leaves something to be desired. The subjects in my study said they are not always satisfied with what they, or others, write or say. An outsider might not even recognize the repetitive nature of their language usage as it is only possible to see that in the long run.

(4) Well I would say pronunciation does not get better, it is the pronunciation of Finnish engineers. And probably also... Things are always dealt with in the same way, which means language usage never gets richer or better. Generally, things are always presented in the same way and the slides are always written in the same way. It is very much black and white, so to say. Now that I have attended the (language) courses I have learned to vary my language. For example, you never hear any metaphors here. (P3)

There was a silent wish for a more subtle or smooth usage of English in most responses. Some were afraid their English might 'be spoiled' by all the 'deficient usage' they face daily.

(5) It is just that here in CompanyA we have these bad habits in how we express ourselves. What happens is that sometimes you learn even the bad ways... (P2)

One respondent referred to the language of their emails, saying:

(6) And full stops and commas, or full stops we do have, but no commas...the punctuation. I mean we are not that well-spoken. It is the same all the time, we use the same expressions all the time. (P3)

Crystal (2001) says this is a 'save-a-keystroke' principle. No unnecessary words or punctuation is used in order to save time and space. Lack of time was frequently mentioned as the underlying reason for using 'bad', impolite, Finnish English. Polite forms require special attention, and that is time-consuming. Efficiency is important. On the other hand, some of them have made a habit of consciously 'resisting' the kind of language they do not want to adopt:

(7) Of course they rub off on you...I try consciously to keep them away. It is more or less that they repeat a certain unnecessary word, or a filler, or they say things in a funny way, and as soon as I notice it, I think to myself: Get rid of that! That is not the correct way of saying that! (P2)



In ELF interaction as well as in NS interaction pauses and periods of silence occur every now and then. Finns are known to tolerate a lot of silence and pauses in the middle of exchanges compared with most language groups. Curiously, my subjects mentioned unnecessary pauses and hesitation as one of the signs of deficient English skills. To be able to speak without awkward breaks (filled with silence) was considered a desirable skill and a fluent communicator was described as:

(8) Well, her language is varied, she uses synonyms, does not hesitate, s/he speaks quite... well...explicitly, and there are no pauses. (P4)

Whether this assumption originates in the presupposed NSE model, or whether there is a more intrinsic reason would be interesting to find out. Of course, pauses in ELF interaction can look like a sign of a NNS having to think of right words and this might explain the fear for pauses.

However, the respondents had not gotten much, if any, feedback on their English skills at work, either from colleagues or management. The only feedback had been from English teachers at language courses. Is this because language is only a tool in their work or is there a common agreement not to touch this subject? One respondent said it is not “part of our culture” to say anything about each others’ English and consequently, she laughed “that is why I do not tell them it is not pronounced [error] management either! She was afraid they might, in response, say something like “who are you to tell me what to do here?” or “that is your goal, I’m ok with my skill level”. She said she would like to see the culture changing in this respect, though, because it would be a good way to learn more.

Their comfort zone as English users has certain dimensions. Some felt, for example, that asking questions in an auditorium full of people, *especially* if the speaker is a native speaker, is challenging. An unprepared dialogue with a native speaker in front of hundreds of people would be too scary. All said they are at their best with English when the subject matter under discussion is within their own field of expertise. It is easy to talk about something you know about, no matter what the language is. It sounded like a lot of their

English usage is quite routinized. However, they said the best way out of the discomfort zone is to force oneself to those scaring new situations. After a while, they become part of one's comfort zone.

## 4.2 Targets and present models

The participants stressed the importance of communicative competence more than language skills (meaning grammar, pronunciation etc.) as such. Communicative competence, according to the respondents, in ELF contexts comprises of sufficient English skills, right attitude and co-operational skills.

The question on language proficiency targets turned out to be a hard one. There were diverse answers to this: one did not have a specific goal, two sounded like they aimed at native speaker level and one strived to be more expressive with the language. As for models, NSE seemed to represent the perfect English speaker to all of them, although competent NNSEs were appreciated as well, in a different way. The native speaker was actually more like an inspiration, not a strict goal. Some told they love to listen to the NSs on TV, at workshops and so on.

(9) Well I trust that they speak correctly. Like, I have many friends, colleagues, well not too many, who are for example Spanish and Romanians and Russians and their English is quite ok too, I'm not saying it isn't. But I don't feel like I learn from them as much as I learn from the native speakers. That is why. (P3)

(10) Grammar...I think you either have the grammar or you don't.

Interviewer: You mean grammar must be the native speaker's grammar?

Yes, that is how I like to think. And I think it must be British English or American English and then everyone adds to it their own way to speak, anyway. (P4)

Although the respondents had goals in their mind, not all of them were actually working very hard to achieve these goals, either because of lack of energy and time or other reasons. Nevertheless, most felt they progress all the time because of the nature of their work. They were sorry, however, that unfortunately there was the downside: the ELF around them also drew them towards unwanted forms, structures and pronunciation. It is possible to take

language courses if one feels the need for them, but one has to have self-initiative in demanding them. The respondents had a very clear picture of what kind of training they want and need. The criteria of efficient language training were: it has to be motivating, must focus on a specific subject field, the teacher must give feedback and point out the learner's errors, must focus on social conversation, small talk...It was clear that they all had different aspirations that one course could never satisfy. This is why it is hard to arrange corporate language training.

Not all felt the need to improve their English. Two interviewees were amazed at why some of the colleagues do not pay attention to their language at all. On the other hand, they considered it everyone's own business in the end and understood the reasons behind it.

(11) ...perhaps they just don't have the passion for it... they do not think it matters so much. (P2)

Most respondents, however, thought it is always possible to get better, but only some have the motivation to really work to achieve new goals. As for language training, most would welcome instruction on NNS varieties and accents because the first steps in the 'accent jungle' can be quite shocking. Some said the best way to learn, however, is to jump in, participate, listen, and learn.

(12) It is the familiarity, that you have been faced with these things. Only after that you can act and even change your own behaviour. And you know that what you say or how you say it is not the same for everyone. (P2)

(13) It would be great to face the real life, because it is rarely that...I work with Americans and Englishmen, but more and more they are something else. That is why it would be good to practise listening comprehension and hear how they talk. Like an Indian who has not studied very much English...I mean it's quite different and there could be some kind of training for that. (P2)

Sensitivity to input seems to be a key factor. It is essential to be awake, so to speak, to learn new things about language and equally importantly, unlearn the unwanted constituents of language. Some do it consciously, others more subconsciously. Most try to resist or get rid of certain features they have

recognized to be 'errors' in the usage of others, but then realize 'they did it again'.

Curiously, all but one were hesitant to believe that their English could ever be any kind of model to other ELF users. One undermined her own variety saying that only people with even worse English could use his English as a model. Probably the mere thought of functioning as an example or model scares them, because the model, in their minds, always must be perfect (i.e. native speaker). I must say that the mere question took them by surprise. But, as they are proficient ELF users, I wanted to get an emic perspective on the ELF scholars' idea of ELF speakers position by the side of the NSEs.

In the section on intercultural communication, I already discussed the possibility of interhuman culture in training programs. One of the respondents came up with the same idea, when asked whether there is something that should be taught about cultures in connection with language instruction:

(14) Why not: there should be respect for humanity and people in every culture and country and respect for each other and a general respect for everyone, a principle. And also, respect for environment. I mean that resources are not limitless and the earth is limited and all this would give the norms. (P4)

### **4.3 Attitudes to NS/NNS English in general**

Jenkins says that most NNS speak English with a 'foreign' accent, which causes different attitudes in speakers and listeners. This can have profound social consequences, she says (2007a: 88).

Certain phonetic details in NNS English seemed to evoke negative attitudes towards the speaker's accent, even if the production of those sounds did not impede intelligibility. This finding is interesting if we think of the basic idea of LFC that stresses the intelligibility factor and ignores other kinds of effects on the listener. The link between listeners' reactions and certain phonetic productions would be interesting to study, and it seems Beinhof (2009) already has some initial findings about similar cases.

(15) Well, as for vocabulary, talk flows and such, but pronunciation is almost ignored. It is like with these two words: [development] and [technology].  
(LAUGHTER) (P2)

However, intelligibility is extremely important to the interviewees, but it is not the whole picture. One of the respondents described the two-way nature of interaction:

(16) I don't know about that ...It is true that just anything can have a harmful effect on intelligibility: the kind of pronunciation that is hard to understand...But it does not mean it is bad language, it is just that I don't understand it. (P1)

This seems an insightful statement as different people find different accents hard to understand. It is usually easier to understand those one is used to listening to. This applies to grammar mistakes as well, as one of the interviewees mentioned the strange grammar errors of the Chinese. Even a single, strangely pronounced sound can really affect the intelligibility of one's speech:

(17) ...I always thought it is only a joke that the Chinese lack...or find it difficult to pronounce certain sounds, but it was this one time when I realized why I find it so hard to understand that guy...it was because he simply did not produce a certain sound and that was why I had all those difficulties with his speech. And another thing is that their grammar is not so good either, the mistakes they make are different from what we are used to at home.(P1)

One respondent explained that one has to orientate differently for an exchange with, say, a Chinese; it is like a different mode you take and this really helps the comprehension. Eastern accents were described as 'peculiar' or 'challenging'. There were also some interesting comments on usages that, obviously, can irritate even another NNS listener. One concerned the use of *whatever*. The interviewee felt a colingual NNSE used it wrongly, somehow. It seems that the NNS in this case made an attempt to sound idiomatic, but did not quite succeed.

(18) ...like many of the engineers in CompanyA do, they list things and then add *whatever!* That is something that hurts my ear and I say: Do not do that. I mean that implies that you are not at all interested in what you say...and what might the other one think...

It is in fact claimed that we judge NNSs more harshly than native speakers in this sense. This might also be one of the reasons why NNSs, Finns included, are shy to use idiomatic expressions: they feel they must be perfect before even

attempting it. This is unfortunate as practice is essential in developing one's competence.

In many respects, NSs still enjoy a high esteem in the eyes of the interviewees (i.e. NSE has a high status dimension). For example, they are considered the only ones making linguistic innovations. In a way, according to the respondents, the NSs own the English language: they are the ones who can be creative with it. When asked what they do to improve their English, British and American films and TV-series and 'a variety of their accents', were mentioned but no NNS accents. On the other hand, those are not so easily available either.

(19) It is very rarely we get any linguistic innovations from anyone else but the native speakers of English! P1

This was a reply to my inquiry about how courageous he is in using new expressions in English. Whether the English of the ethnic Anglo speaker is the linguistic reference point to the interviewees was an interesting topic. The subjects had a twofold attitude to this.

(20) Interviewer: So, you are not satisfied until...what?

Well, it would be...I always think that for as long as I don't speak like the locals...

Interviewer: Whom do you mean by locals?

Well, I mean British English, primarily, because it has been taught to us. (P2)

This person can be said to have a high solidarity dimension with the NS accent, she seems to identify with it strongly.

What is the reaction if a person has a heavy accent, makes plenty of grammar mistakes and/or has no intonation? Some interviewees said they tend to lose interest in what the interlocutor is saying. Listening gets too tiring. This may affect how much work gets done and can sometimes lead to misunderstandings (even though this seems to be rare). This is what Vollstedt (2002) referred to (as discussed in chapter 2.3.1). Two interviewees admitted to have been forced to send e-mail later on and ask what was

actually said. This, however, does not seem to be a daily problem; asking questions and asking for rephrasing on the spot are widely used strategies among the participants in the study. Unfortunately this does not always lead to clearer formulations and in certain situations it feels improper to even ask. One of the subjects gave an example of this. A native speaker of English had, in the middle of a work-related presentation, started to tell about the death that had occurred just before she left her country. The Finnish audience seemed to be listening and nodding, my interviewee among them, but as they gathered together at lunch they found no-one really knew who had died! More significantly, no-one asked either. Another respondent explains her strategies:

(21) I think it is only stupid to keep nodding and let the others believe you understand! (P2)

Telephone conferences seem to be more problematic from the point of view of NNS language than face-to-face contacts. This is natural as gestures and facial expressions of the group members help to interpret talk.

Surprisingly, all of the interviewees commented on the Finnish “engineer English”, or “tankero-English”, varieties of NNS English among others. They explained it by a tendency to focus on function more than trying to produce any standard forms of English or proper pronunciation. Is this kind of English successful? One of them described the situation like this:

(22) Let’s say we have this really dull RFD engineer who has no intonation or nothing. Like when he just talks monotonously – I must say I lose my interest. It [pronunciation and intonation] is of importance, I think. (P3)

In other words, listeners get the meaning of what is said, but the speaker loses their interest. That might be meaningful in business negotiations, for example. However, it is often too easy to resort to ‘tankero-English’, they say, because of a sort of group pressure. This applies especially to situations where there are no native speakers around. When asked whether their own language changes in anyway depending on who is listening, NSs or NNSs, I got the following answer that implies that despite the problems with NNS

Englishes, interaction with NNSs are still 'tolerated' better than interaction with NSs. This might be a sign of inferiority feelings.

(23) Yes, I think so [that she speaks English in the same way with everyone] but the only thing is...that it is probably easiest to speak with Finns, the Swedes come next and then Indians and the rest, and then the native speakers of English. (P2)

Near-native skills in English is claimed to be what most EFL learners hope for. This is not necessarily the whole truth, in the light of my study. The near-NS accent of a Finnish NNSE was not altogether unproblematic, according to the respondents. They seemed to think one must have a certain background 'to be entitled' to have an NS accent. They were also aware of the fact that it is not an easy task to accomplish. As argued before, it really seems that acquiring native-like nuances, really can be counter-productive for an NNSE. (cf. Seidlhofer 2005: 340)

(24) It takes a great deal of dedication [to achieve NS level] (P2)

(25) I am in a situation where I do not want to start imitating or pursue any kind of native pronunciation, like those of the UK or US. Of course I do something like that, I try to speak fluently, but to start speaking like those from the UK, that would be unnatural to me. It may be that I'm at a level when it still feels like that. Or if I went to live there for a while - then it could feel more natural, but if I now started to talk like that - that would not be natural to me. (P3)

(26) Strictly speaking, it depends on whether one has lived in that country and been there...I have experience of both cases. A good friend of mine has lived in the UK for a long time and it was totally ok for her to speak like that but then again, I know people who have never lived there and still try to talk like them...that sounds like parroting to me...(P3)

Most respondents in this study said one of the advantages of Finnish English, Finglish, is that it is so easy to understand - by Finns, at least. But it is also a laughing matter - that we all sound the same. The respondents also told the working language easily switches over to Finnish when the last representative of other nationalities leaves the meeting. Surprisingly, this often seemed to affect the nature of the discussion as well and this, I think, is an interesting finding.

(27) Like if the last ones that speak English leave and we Finns go on, what happens is that the nature of the conversation changes a little...It becomes... well kind of...of course it gets more relaxed as everyone is on home ground.



And I don't know whether it affects the results very much or whether the results will be better, but at least a few barriers disappear. Deficiencies in the ability to express yourself can be problematic. (P1)

However, one interviewee felt it is easier to speak English at work, even with Finns sometimes, as the terminology used is in English, anyway.

It is not the morphosyntactic errors that in general provoke a strong reaction. It is the heavily-accented speech that sometimes hurts the respondents' ears. This was also one of the findings in Björkman's (2009) study in Swedish context. However, there was one grammatical feature that disturbed most of the interviewees in my study, i.e. the missing of the present tense third person *-s*. This is interesting as ELF research mentions it as one of the features that does not impede intelligibility and would be 'acceptable' in ELF usage for that reason. The language learning background of the participants in my study might explain their reaction: the third person *-s* is strongly emphasized in the English classrooms. In the interviewees' eyes, not being able to produce the correct form here seems to be a failure of some kind.

(28) This is exactly what I usually correct in my husband's English, as he might say "she send me an email". And I go: "She sends you an email!" So I always correct it as it bothers me so much. (P4)

(29) I have been told to use the third person *-s* and even if I do not always remember to use it, I always notice when it is missing in someone else's speech. It really hurts my ear to hear it. (P1)

(30) Of course I comprehend it, but my ear tells me it must be there. (P1)

#### **4.4 Attitudes to ELF and its implied effects on language**

The ELF perspective was novel to the participants in the study. Of course, they are not linguists and theoretical concepts of this kind may be strange to them, but it was interesting that none of the subjects admitted to having thought that the different English languages they face every day would have common characteristics or a 'common name'. The principles of the Lingua Franca Core proposal, and the interviewer's suggestion that perhaps ELF one day will be accepted as a variety of its own and possibly even some kind of

model, confused them. The sheer notion of ELF being a variety of English was rejected at first:

(31) My first reaction is that that does not exist [ELF].

Interviewer: Why is your first reaction that it does not exist?

Because there are all those varieties of their own: Indians speak in their way and Finns speak in their way. What would be the overarching element? Well, all right, I read that there are common features, but somehow I do not feel this exists! No, I really do not think there are that many things in common. But I have never thought of this either, so this is quite interesting. It might be that I'll change my mind, gradually. (P4)

(32) Yes but they all speak it differently, not in the same way, it does not have a logic to it. (P2)

(33) I think this is almost like impoverishing the language. (P3)

The thought of ELF becoming a model in any sense of the word was not received well either. Some compared acceptance of ELF as a model with 'giving up', and another hoped we did not kill the English language. This is not surprising, and implies that ELF proponents face a great challenge before ELF users (or EFL learners) learn to accept ELF as a legitimate variety, an endpoint, or a goal. Tradition, stemming from the past experiences of language learning, is a powerful force. The topic raised surprisingly emotive and strong reactions in some participants and ELF was depicted as "taking the easy way out".

(34) Here my first thought is that let's not take this kind of models. I wonder why we should take them. Everything would be the same somehow. I feel like...why should the cultural and different nuances be stuffed into the same box? In a way, it forces us into a pattern.

But after taking some time to reflect on it, the pros of ELF-based learning came to the mind of one the respondents:

(35) Now that I think of it, it could be that like when at school (I told you that they sometimes pointed out differences between British English and American English)...and if we were now taught the more general English and it would only be mentioned as a curiosity that the Brits and Americans put an -s- in the third person present tense. That is not an impossible thought.(P1)

So this interviewee was, in the end, ready to at least momentarily accept ELF as a standard and BrE and AmE as varieties among others. However, most interviewees held on to their view about the NSE being the model:

(36) I know there is such a thing, but I don't think it should be taught because that is not the real thing. I guess it's because I've worked in CompanyA for so long and I've probably been brainwashed in that things should be done well and properly and proper things. That's why it's against my values to teach fake things like this. Really, I think it's great that people know their mother tongue well and if and when they start learning another language, they should learn the real one. (P3)

The whole ELF movement, as far as I understand, was created for the best of the ELF speakers, to legitimize their own accents and varieties. This is why it is important to find out what the actual practitioners think about ELF. Authorities should not be telling them to start doing things differently without good reasons. At this point I want to emphasize that I am aware of the fact that Jenkins and other ELF researchers have not actually said that ELF would ever become a model for language learning. However, LFC is a step towards that direction.

Some interviewees mentioned that they would not like to have an NNS English teacher that comes from a different linguistic background to their own. Native speakers of English, BrE or AmE, or a local Finnish teacher were preferred. This again might be due to what they are used to. They emphasized the fact that they would not like to learn English "with a foreign accent". Perhaps Finnish teachers of English are accepted as they are known to be able to explain things in Finnish, or, as one of the subjects said, they trust them to know English well enough.

The interviewees did not seem to want to be patronised as to their linguistic choices, in the sense that they do not want someone else to decide what they will be able to learn or what kind of models they will be offered. ELF is said to legitimize the learners' own phonologies and accents (Jenkins 2002), but many of the users themselves seem to resist this idea, it seems.

(37) But I do not want to be taught an imperfect language. (P2)

(38) It is a little....I must say I'm quite conservative in these matters! (P4)

(39) Well it depends, I would not be satisfied, I would like to say it, say what I mean as well and clearly and almost without errors. And I expect to be addressed in errorless English. But that is a character question. (LAUGHTER)  
(P4)

One interviewee particularly emphasized that even if she knows that she will never speak like a NS, she would still like to have it as a target and a model. This, I think, was the general feeling among the interviewees. However, the subjects may just be unaware of the strong NS influence that still prevails in the teaching of English in Finland, at least. Certain pedagogic procedures are taken for granted as no other models have been available. Jenkins (see e.g. 2007a), among others, has dealt with this issue more thoroughly in her writings.

The subjects described a wide diversity of varieties of English they hear at work, but they did not seem to think about the similarities between them. At least there were no comments on this. More than anything else, the subjects tended to hear the speakers' L1 in their Englishes.

(40) There was a French guy at the table next to us just a moment ago and I think it was French English more than European English. We have our own "tankero" English and I think it is a long way to any European English. (P4)

(41) Well actually I do not, if I think of the English the Germans or the French speak, their pronunciation, at least, reveals them right away. I don't think there is a common European English. (P2)

To conclude, when asked whether there really is an ELF variety the subjects answered there is no single variety, but a set of varieties. They find it hard to believe there are enough common features in the Englishes of the representatives of different nationalities for them to group those varieties under one label, i.e. ELF (or Euro-English for that matter). One interviewee distinguished three Englishes: western, eastern and African.

So, the speaker's L1 appeared to them as the most prominent feature marking an individual's personal style of speaking English. Consequently, they also regarded Finnish English as a separate variety of English, although it was also easier for them to find sub-varieties in it than in other NNS

Englishes (e.g. engineer English). However, some of the participants were able to see common problem areas in the Englishes of NNSs, but most think the problems are due to a kind of interlanguage that the speakers can, or at least should, get over with. All in all, there was a tendency among them to see the deviant features of ELF as errors rather than legitimate variants. This is not at all surprising, however, knowing the traditional line of thought. Of course, it may be that they pay attention to the effect of L1 especially in those languages they have heard spoken, and which they are familiar with, as they recognize the 'sound'.

Most subjects had a desire to "get better at their English". When asked what exactly it is they need to get better at, most referred to small talk and talking about everyday things or chit chat, as one of the respondents put it. It also became clear that the best way to improve one's English would be to live in an 'English as a native language -country' for a while. This again reinforces the assumption that NSE is the desired model for them.

The participants in the study gave reasons for their strict views about ELF as a notion and a model. Firstly, they thought that a language goes hand in hand with culture and history. Secondly, it would be wrong towards the real English and ELF is a fake construct. Thirdly, it underestimates the speakers of English in the world. One asked what the added value is. The only positive sides mentioned were that one would have a closer peer group if ELF was taken as the leading principle, and that ELF would be easier to acquire (because it was seen as a reduced system).

#### **4.5 Learner/user identity**

Most felt they have multiple roles regarding their use of English. At work they see themselves mostly as legitimate users of English (ELF?), but elsewhere they can easily take on the learner role, even if it often is a subconscious choice. It often looks like those with a curious and open mind learn faster. I argue elsewhere that noticing and meaningful production

practices are key characteristics in fostering foreign language development. It looked as if it is so with the some of the respondents too.

(42) The language courses have helped me in this [not to get anxious with native speakers]. And when you dare admit that you do not know or do not understand...it really lowers the stress level. (P3)

One can consider him/herself as a competent user and a learner simultaneously. The twofold role is clearly expressed in the following comment:

(43) I really feel I am a user-learner [of English]. (LAUGHTER) (P4)

Gass et al (2007:792) argue that Firth and Wagner (1997) merged learners and users and failed to make the argument that *using* language and *learning* language may take place simultaneously. Firth (2009) admits interactive learning happens at workplaces. Gass et al. (ibid.) and many others have also shown that interactive use contributes to acquisition. Some of the respondents clearly took advantage of the work situations linguistically.

(44) And yes, I like to listen when there is a presentation where they discuss with each other or something like that. There is time to take notes and sometimes I do that. Or I pick up an expression and ask what it was. I mean I do piggyback. (P3)

To sum it up, being a learner seems to be totally all right if we do not associate the word *learner* with *deficient communicator*. Many learners are excellent communicators even though their language skills may not be on par with the language skills of fluent native speakers (Gass et al. 2007:792.) Self-confidence (with NNSEs) also always shows and usually there is no need to feel inferior. According to the respondents, in NNS-NNS interaction the situation is more balanced. But it is harder for an NNSE to take on the competent user role or show self-confidence with an NSE. One of the interviewees talks about the feelings towards NSEs:

(45) Well the thing I mentioned: When a native speaker starts to pass remarks because of one's language usage. It really ticks me off and I want to switch into Finnish and ask: How about this then? (P1)

(46) That is exactly what it is...it provokes an unpleasant reaction. I mean that it is not...Is it language proficiency that we are talking about? It doesn't happen

often, but every now and then. Every now and then, yes. And I don't remember if it has happened at work or somewhere else. (P1)

## 4.6 ELF identity

The respondents did not have, or did not recognize in themselves, an obvious ELF speaker identity, at least in the sense that they seemed unwilling to be categorized as ELF speakers. They do not see their language as an endpoint – rather a temporary state on one's way to something else. So, there does not seem to be much 'sense of ownership' of their English language yet.

(47) It should be a little more... [language is not just a tool]

Interviewer: And do you think your language skills are a little more...?

Perhaps, or at least I try. I thought my language is more than that... (P2)

Also, most respondents somehow distanced themselves from the group of ELF speakers. By this I mean that the way they talked about the phenomenon and the 'variety' suggested that they did not count themselves as part of that group; that to belong to it one would have to have 'learned' ELF in the first hand or that they would have to have characteristics they do not have. I took this to imply that as they have identified themselves as EFL learners it is hard for them to comprehend what ELF is. This, of course, can be a misinterpretation. Nevertheless, most feel there is a CompanyA variety of English, which might appear as strange to NSs, and also to NNSs who are not part of the crew.

Some of the respondents even take on a slightly different role or 'face' when speaking English. This might be more general than we believe. In a way, one can have two identities: the person who speaks Finnish and the person who speaks English/ELF. This can be a strategy in coping with the situation, a quite relieving one.

(48) No, I'm much more polite and considerate [in English] and I use the conditional and I'm altogether different...(P3)

(49) But it is so that...It had a counter effect for me too, I mean I started saying 'voisitko' (could you) and 'tulisitko' (could you come). I wondered where it came from. It comes from English! (P3)

(50) Actually I'm quite shy in social situations, but I think in English it is easier to come up with things, find things to say to the other one in the situation. I think I might be more lively in English than in Finnish. (P4)

There was also the other side of the matter. Not speaking one's own L1 can function as an excuse to bring in one's identity as a Finn. Whether this happens more in interaction with other NNSEs or with NSs is unknown, but I suppose it is more acceptable in NNS-NNS exchanges.

(51) And it [speaking in English] gives you an excuse to be somewhat untalkative and a 'bumpkin' as the English is not natural. It is perhaps easier to be in the situation, as it is not a natural situation and the interlocutor, too, knows that it is not natural. That is why it is easier to be there...(P4)

An ELF speaker can feel inferior if s/he thinks that another ELF speaker judges him/her on native speaker standards. Although all respondents did not admit having compared their accents to those of others, this is possible in certain situations. The following comment showed how comparison to NSEs can be considered threatening.

(52) ...and for the first time I noticed any comparing to anyone. It was the first time and what brought on the pressure was that that person [an NNSE] had been living in the US. (P3)

Most respondents said or implied indirectly that NSEs have the advantage in a way. However, it was recognized that there is no need to look up to them as their situation is so different: the NSEs speak their L1, while English is a foreign language to the respondents in this study. Some feel the NS-NNS situation can affect what is said and who says in meetings, workshops etc.

(53) Yes that has happened to me. I have not felt insulted or like that, but I think: I wonder if s/he speaks any other languages. I mean it is easy for her to speak **English!** (P3)

(54) I mean we should question it [the superiority of NSEs], because in this kind of culture we are in, like in workshops and such, they are in charge most of the time as the language is English and they know how to speak it really well. And perhaps a Finn, who might actually know a lot more about the subject matter, holds his peace and says nothing. That, I think, is in fact dangerous. Of course it is a challenge for us that we should keep talking and say things even if we



...speak the way we speak. I mean it often goes like that: the native English speakers make the running. (P2)

Whether this is true in a wider scale is unknown to me, but if it is, it needs further investigation. The studies of Rogerson-Revell (2008: 356-357) show, however, that there is generally a larger proportion of inactive NNSE participants than NSE participants in meeting/negotiation interactions. The reasons for this are not clear as the overall linguistic performances of all speakers were generally assessed quite positively.

All in all, it was not generally acknowledged that ELF speakers actually are the majority and in a position to claim some rights. This, I think, was reflected e.g. in the bewildered comment I got, when I explained that the NSEs are a minority and Elf speakers actually outnumber them.

(55) I have never thought of that. Well yes...

Interviewer: There are more of you than them.

OK, OK, [long silence] Self-confidence...Ok, all right. (P3)

It was symptomatic that all respondents but one found it hard to see how their own variety of English could ever be a model to another ELF speaker. Most felt they can only function as models to children or people with very poor language skills. This critical attitude was said to be due to comparison to "perfectness, the NSEs". The one of the interviewees who could imagine her English functioning as a model for other NNSEs, showed great confidence in her language skills in other ways too, and actually, wanted to blend in with native speakers of English.

Consequently, the interviewees always seem to feel "safer" among other NNSEs, and this might be interpreted as a sign of belonging to a group, the group of ELF speakers, who do not judge:

(56) It is always the same, I mean if I'm the only non-native speaker of English present, I get nervous - I feel I'm an underdog. Even if you know about the subject, it is easier for them to use all those minor nuances and become...But when there are Finns, Swedes, Indians, I get the feeling we are all on equal footing. Because they all speak it and no one masters it perfectly and even if they did, it would be the same. (P2)

## 4.7 Problems with ELF in use

Although I did not specifically ask about problems in English usage, certain points of view emerged from the data. Although the general feeling (and hope) was that everything gets done and no serious problems arise in communication, a couple of interesting points of view emerged. There were interesting comments on how certain words can have very different meanings for different cultures. One interviewee mentioned the words *passion*, *emotion* and *proud* when used in employee discussions. She said this can downright cause misinterpretations. However, there are inter-individual differences within cultures so it is impossible to know whether the differences are only cultural.

(57) ..and there is this "passion for innovation" ad 'passion' for Finns is quite a challengin word 'into himo' - the average engineer here is in no way 'passion' and things like this can cause frustration. (P3)

(58) We have had statements like "I'm proud of my supervisor". I mean surely Finns do not think they are 'proud' of their supervisors! But for an American it can be true, I mean: Yes, he is a great guy and so wonderful...(P3)

(59) Or for that matter, "express feelings" or "emotions". 'Feelings' is perhaps easier, but 'emotions' is something that requires emotional life and that is a challenge for Finns. (P3)

Flat, monotonous, repetitive language is another frequently mentioned problem. It seems to disturb them as a speaker and as a listener, equally. Interestingly, men were mentioned to use this kind of language more often than women.

(60) Our communication is like "bang, bang, bang" and still everything is quite organized. With men, everything is done according to the agenda and in correct order. (P3)

(61) I find it somehow monotonous. It would be nice if it had....It would be good for me as well to think of new words and not the same old ones. And you would learn at the same time, that is another advantage. (P3)

She said it is possible that using flat language is actually a way of **avoiding** the situation that someone might not understand and needs to consult a dictionary. Using richer and more complicated language might provoke a reaction, like for example: Why don't you say it "like we have always said

it", she argues. Flat language, in a way, makes everybody's life easier. It was also argued that men are more afraid of losing face and thus might keep to strict professional terminology just to play safe and retain the "expert" face.

## 5 DISCUSSION AND A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In this chapter I will account for the findings of the study, trying to bind it to the theory of ELF. I first take up some more general issues and then discuss findings that deserve special attention in answering my research questions.

The focus in this study is on the people using ELF in the workplace. Björkman (2008:40), having studied overt disturbance caused by non-standard morpho-lexical forms among ELF speakers in a Swedish university setting, claims: "The problem might be what speakers do not or cannot say rather than what they do say." She implies that covert disturbance might also exist, i.e. something the subjects are not ready to talk about or do not really understand what it is. In the same way, my interviewees might not have expressed their innermost feelings or reactions on all points, for some reason. That, however, is something I have to accept as it is. Nevertheless, I would say that in a way, covert feelings, as covert disturbance is exactly what the interviewees in my study were talking about when they described their experiences in various ELF exchanges. Comprehensibility or intelligibility might not be affected but a certain feeling of unease with the interlocutor's, or own, language was felt. How much that affects distraction, motivation or business in general is another story and worth investigating.

Overall the findings corroborate previous studies which show ELF as a very cooperative and mostly successful means of communication. Although the interviewees did not seem too keen on ELF as a model they would, however, seem to be ready to accept more ELF related material in language instruction, like in the form of familiarizing them with typical features of certain local Englishes. This was partly because they feel there **is no single ELF** but varieties of ELF. It seems that they want to learn the traditional native Englishes, but spiced with a touch of ELF. So, instead of trying to create an ELF core, we should perhaps try to build a pedagogical model first for teaching what the notion of ELF is all about. Also, language trainers should

try to improve the students' listener skills as well as skills in cooperation, accommodation and rapport management.

Non-natives, no matter what their proficiency level, are embarrassed by their compatriots' struggles in the nonnative language (Fayer and Krasinski 1987: 321)

The subjects seemed to be quite critical of non-native speech produced by their compatriots. Beinhoff (2005, as cited in Jenkins 2009: 89) also found that ELF speakers are strict towards their own L1 group although they in general are quite tolerant of NNS's accents. Jenkins (2007a) sees the heavy 'native speaker' ideology of ELT and its potential to affect accent attitudes as one of the reasons for this phenomenon. Denigration of one's own variety of English and the question of what constitutes intelligibility were discussed in the interviews. Intelligibility, as a participant in my interview data describes, is a two-way, co-constructed process.

The closer they get the supposed native speaker usage and NS model the happier most are with their language proficiency. This is not surprising knowing what ELT in Finland has been. But considering the multinational NNS environment the interviewees work in daily, the finding is to some degree surprising and there is a contradiction in the apparent success of their English usage and their background feelings. Although they already have feelings of success about their English, they would, in fact, be entitled to have those feelings even in interaction with NSs.

No lack of awareness of the existence of other varieties of English seems to exist among my interviewees (or in their workplaces in general). Still, it seems they are not totally moving away from the traditional NS English norms. Timmis (2002) in her study of learner attitudes found that learners are even slower to give up the norms than teachers!

Intriguingly, but not surprisingly, I found that the concept of English as a lingua franca was quite unknown to the interviewees. The fact that all the different Englishes around them have a common name took them by

surprise. This, I think, is partly because they see English mainly as a communication tool and have not really had any reason to pay attention to the different language usages or their significance. The “core” of their work is somewhere else. In a way there is a contradiction: ELF surrounds them but they do not see, or do not want to see, themselves as members of that group. This, I think, means that they do not have an ELF identity and have not acknowledged the need for their English to be legitimized. This is what Holliday (2008) also found out in his email correspondence with various people. But as Jenkins (2007a: 106) claims: “...we can probably never make definitive links between attitude and cause.” This seems to be a weakness in this study as well.

### **5.1 Users /learners of English**

The interviewees seemed to think that their present English is something they deploy while still striving to learn a more “normal English”. This, however, does not mean that they are desperately working to achieve a higher proficiency by attending language courses etc. They see their English as a kind of ‘interlanguage’, but do not really mind it, as it suffices in what they are doing with it. Firth (2009: 134) claims the work roles of people override or render irrelevant their learner roles. After all, they are learning more “on the fly”, some more, some less. This, I think, could be called what Firth calls learning-in-interaction (Firth 2009: 139).

Most said their identity is that of a user of English at workplace and that of a learner at leisure. Nevertheless, they showed their ‘language learner status’ (Firth 2009: 137) and language learning strategies even at the workplace every now and then. For example, they listen actively for new, reusable expressions and in case of non-understanding the interviewees signal their need for negotiation of meaning. Normally this does not disrupt the ongoing interaction in any way, but allows their interlocutors to explain or paraphrase. They were more afraid of asking an NSE, however, but on the

other hand NSEs were felt to be more capable of paraphrasing (if only they were asked to do so).

## 5.2 Goals and models

Languages are learned to levels and for roles which are determined by the learners' needs. (Mackay 2003)

An interesting finding was that the subjects felt they are not always able to carry on a domestic conversation well enough or, like one of the interviewees said, "ask for breadcrumbs in the grocery store, for example". Nevertheless, they manage sufficiently (some say perfectly) in their tasks in corporate setting. Consequently, most respondents wanted to achieve a command of everyday vocabulary, small talk skills but also general fluency, accuracy and for some, ability to better express nuances in English. Getting rid of unnecessary pauses and hesitation was seen as a desirable goal by many. This suggests they do not want to speak English like they might speak Finnish, as pauses are a more natural part of Finnish interaction. Preston (2008:56) says language learners have the right to develop their personal selves as they learn a new language. Some of the comments of the respondents implied that they might not feel the need to do this, or, they feel a pressure to be something else (more like the NSs?). Some even like to take on a different role when speaking English.

One of the interviewees who had lived in an ENL/ESL environment and who had been using the language as a daily communication tool for years seemed to want to blend in, during her professional encounters, with native speakers. In a case like this, native-like fluency is a natural learning goal for her. Some of the respondents would love to be confused as a native speaker, although these wishes were only expressed by those who had already faced a situation like this. They expressed pleasure at what had happened and it was taken as a compliment. However, like I said before, few are ready to admit that sounding like an NS or to be mistaken as an NS would be an actual goal for them. It seems that although their English is 'Finnish English' to a certain

extent, they do not see it as a final goal. Also, most of them are not ready to recommend their own English as a model to anyone; this shows a certain feeling of inferiority and implies a 'deficiency factor'. All in all there seems to be a certain gap between their actual communicative behaviour and their perceived linguistic norms and aspirations.

Several studies have shown ELF to be a highly successful means of communication, but it does not always come without work and effort. The speakers of ELF need a variety of skills, acknowledged or not, that help them to achieve successful communication. The subjects in my study mentioned the need for 'soft skills', i.e. tolerance, politeness etc. They need communicative, interpersonal, listening, accommodation, and cultural skills. They seem to have internalized the essential skills although Berns (2008: 332) says the learners may not always realize the extent to which attitude and tolerance play a role in communicative success and failure. Of course, they occasionally feel frustrated by a foreign accent, but the general feeling is, in the words of a respondent: "We are all members of this company - more so than members of India, Finland, etc." We should also remember that they all have received years of language instruction at schools without which they would not be working where they are now. A lot of ELF speakers live in an ELF reality where accommodation skills have become a given fact and a natural part of their professional skills.

The ability to show clarity and precision instead of vagueness in their English seems to be important at least in the kind of work setting where exact self-expression can be vital. Negative connotations were attached to language which is not precise enough. On the other hand, preciseness and sticking to facts sometimes makes the language sound even too flat and unnatural. This is what the respondents call engineer English.

Vagueness is in fact an essential feature of language and competent users are generally able to use "a degree of vagueness which is right" for their purpose (Channell 1994: 3). This is something the interviewees in my study mentioned as



one of the skills they would like to attain. They want to sound both fluent and natural, even if speaking with an accent that reflects their mother tongue. The question is, what gives language the quality of sounding natural (or dare I say native-like)? O'Keefe et al (2007) give a list of the most frequent six-word chunks that occur in a 5 million word corpus of spoken English. This list includes chunks like *"and all that sort of thing"*, *"if you see what I mean"*, *"I don't know what it is"*, *"at the end of the day"*. In L1, these are high-frequency elements and come naturally to NSEs, but not necessarily to ELF speakers. Should they be able to produce these chunks in their own English to sound "natural" or is there another, ELF way?

### 5.3 Attitudes towards varieties of English

Learners' attitudes regarding the ownership of English and its status in international/intercultural communication are paramount, says Sifakis (2007). Their attitudes towards pronunciation are likely to reveal their thoughts on this. It seems that the norm-bound approach still prevails to a certain extent even in workplace contexts. The participants in my study have been studying English at school and the main goal of EFL often is to pass exams and to proceed in the direction of native-like proficiency. It is unlikely that they are able to change their attitude to language targets just like that. One of them asked if she had been brainwashed at school, as she insists on the third person -s! Jenkins (2006: 143) indeed claims that "a far larger number [of EFL learners in Expanding Circle] seem to have been misled by the prevailing standard NS ideology."

As mentioned before, the majority of encounters in English today take place between non-native speakers. Moreover, many business meetings held in English appear to run more smoothly when there are no native English-speakers present (Graddol, 2006). In the light of the answers of the interviewees, this is only part of the truth. A lot depends on how the NSs are able to accommodate their language and also, how self-confident the NNSs are about their right to ask for paraphrasing.

Some scholars say ELF is only about NNS-NNS interaction. In my opinion it is not even wise to isolate NSs from ELF discourse in this increasingly global world. ELF is a two-way flow and so are NS-NNS exchanges. What is the role of the native English speaker in this matter? The findings of my study show that the NS is sometimes seen as part of the communicative problems that the ELF speakers face. The interviewees said that the NSs could be more sensitive to the ELF speakers, although generally, they are quite helpful once acknowledged of the need for accommodation. Whether the reason for the implied problems is in the NNSs' own attitudes or the way NSs behave when they get a chance to excel in front of the NNS (as regards language usage), is unknown. Skapinker (2007) cites Seidlhofer, who has also acknowledged that relief at the absence of native speakers seems to be common.

When we talk to people (often professionals) about international communication, this observation is made very often indeed. We haven't conducted a systematic study of this yet, so what I say is anecdotal for the moment, but there seems to be very widespread agreement about it. (Seidlhofer in Skapinker 2007)

However, McMaster (2004) challenges this view. On the other hand, the respondents in the study perceived NSs as sources of new language information, targets of feelings of envy, helpful in negotiation of meaning, but also dominating, and "the only ones who really know English". I also got the feeling that it is not easy to admit feelings of inferiority here, as professional people are expected to cope and survive in whatever they are faced with. To sum it up, it is not impossible that communication between and among NNSs is considered so unproblematic partly because communication with NSs is not always considered easy. NNSs understand each others' language problems more readily.

To improve their perceptive abilities, the learners need to be exposed to a variety of English accents (Erling 2006). Unfortunately, this is not always possible in teaching contexts as the learning materials not always support this, at least so far. In reality, the input often only comes from the exchanges at work (or at leisure) and this is why the beginning of the careers can be

challenging. A wish for more intercultural training, especially training in getting to know different varieties of English in the world was expressed among the respondents. Again, we could ask whether it is the English teacher's responsibility to expose the learners to all the various English varieties and accents. If some teaching time was released by implementing e.g. LFC, the extra time could be used on increasing awareness about foreign accents, of course. On the other hand, some of the subjects in the study said they like to learn as they go – discomfort zones soon become comfort zones. Erling (2006) says it is good if proficient L2 speakers can offer attractive models of English to language learners. However, a change of attitude is still needed here, and this was salient in the interviewees' comments as well. Not only learners and users of English, but also their teachers should increasingly focus on all the positive input available in an ELF environment, instead of being afraid of potential errors being transferred. Now, the respondents felt they have to actively monitor their English, in order to fight the "unnaturalness" and "odd, unnecessary vocabulary" that surround them in their workplace, and which easily get assimilated in their own usage.

Flexibility is an essential skill in the workplace. It is important to adjust to one another to understand each other (Erling 2006). The respondents emphasized the fact that content, after all, is more important than the form of their language usage.

(62) The point is not the language usage in itself – the language – it is in the **content** we are trying to convey. (P1)

But having said that, I must say they also expressed a wish to be able to use the English language more fully and expressively. A feeling of frustration as regards the ELF usage and its 'deficiencies' in the work context was apparent in most interviews. Language skills as such, are not the **core** of their professions, but it is a question of '**wanting**' more than '**having to**'.

## 5.4 ELF Identity

It is difficult to say whether the interviewees' identity as Finns, particularly, affects how they see themselves as users of English. At least they seemed proud of being Finnish, but yet being able to speak English. Scandinavians are generally renowned for being excellent speakers of English (Oakes 2001:165), but it has been claimed Finns are quite modest when assessing their own language (or other) skills. I did not get the feeling that the interviewees would belittle their skills: they have a strong tendency to think that if one can cope with the diverse work situations one must be quite proficient. But how proficient are they? Very little feedback seems to be available at the workplace, so it is up to one's own assessment. Everyone defines his or her own "fluency" – this is why being fluent can mean anything from just basic English skills to competent, advanced-level expert usage. Also Firth (2009: 136) found out that language proficiency is at no time made the explicit object of attention in ELF work situations. L2 proficiency is a highly private matter in this context. This seems to be the 'modus operandi' within these environments, he claims, and this makes workplaces totally different learning environments from schools.

Most identified themselves as speakers of Finnish English or English and not as ELF speakers. This attitude was challenged after the last part of the interview where we discussed the notion of ELF. Still, most held on to the thought that there is no specific ELF identity. In other words, it seems they did not have the need of "the **what** defined for them", at least yet. Their views were in a way conservative, but that was expected, as tradition forms their views and there was no acknowledged ELF before. I want to conclude with something one of the interviewees said:

(63) So what could be the culture or identity of ELF then? Well I think it must be a kind of world citizen identity! (P4)

## 6 IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE TRAINING AND TEACHING

“It is, of course, too early to talk of ‘teaching ELF as such.’ (Jenkins, 2007a:238)

...ELF corpus linguists do not believe in automatic transfer from sociolinguistic description to pedagogic prescription. (Jenkins, 2007a: 238)

Too many linguistic studies and books stop at the classroom door. It is hard to find any practical, real-life solutions to teaching problems. Despite the quantity of academic discourse around English in the world before the time of ELF, there was little change in the English language teaching practice (Saraceni, 2008:22). What are the practical pedagogic implications of ELF now, if any? Teachers want to know what they can leave out, what they should change and how to adapt their instruction. Teachers are facing a dilemma: EIL (and probably ELF as well) as future pedagogic principles are recommended, but, with our heavy history of NS-based instruction, we find it very troublesome to take in new policies. Sifakis (2007: 151-152), referring to the discussion around EIL, argues:

While such discussions have been forthcoming in these matters, what has not been made entirely clear until now is what sense a teacher interested in teaching EIL can make of it in practical, tangible terms (p. 151-152).

Obviously, the very limited findings of my study do not allow any wider scale conclusions to be drawn. However, as a major problem seems to be to spell out what the ELF/L2 user goal actually means, I attempt to give a short description of what has been said about it within ELF research so far and then supplementing it with bits and pieces of what the results of my study perhaps imply.

The issue of teaching English as an international language has been debated and discussed in the fields of applied linguistics and ELT in recent years. It has also been claimed that language trainers should prepare business people, be they L1- or L2-users of the language, to cope with the maximum range of contexts and interlocutors. What are the changes that are needed in language

pedagogy in order to do this? Prodromou (2007b:10) suggests we move from a view of English as 'model', to language as a process of acquiring maximum 'linguistic capital'. This is all very well, but unfortunately, extremely mixed abilities, over-ambitious goals or no goals at all are all familiar to English teachers in the corporate setting. Performance objectives vs. educational objectives clash as tailored courses would bring too heavy a work load on the teacher. The corporate learners of English - the customers of business language schools - are often expected to set their own goals for themselves. Consequently, the learners should be better aware of research results, alternatives and models available. As said, the traditional mainstream SLA theory still regards native-speaker competence as the primary legitimate target in language learning and this shows in corporate training as well. Theory and practice should go hand in hand more often. Jennifer Jenkins (2007a:27) notes:

English is still taught as though the primary need of learners is to be able to communicate with its native speakers, and with the assumption that correct English is either Standard British or American English.

The state of the matters is not surprising as NS model has probably been the model in the training of the present teachers as well. Jenkins does point out that apart from raising learners' awareness of the diversity of English and their own sociolinguistic reality ('pluricentrism' rather than 'monocentrism'), it will be important for ELT professionals like teachers, teacher trainers, and educators to raise their own awareness.

Holliday (2008: 124, see also 2005), on the other hand, claims it will not be easy to teach English as an international language or ELF as this might be seen as an attempt to impose an inferior model on the 'periphery'. Teachers would probably be more willing of getting rid of the native or near-native speaker competence ideal if they knew what the new model(s) will be. This, I think, makes the ELF concept complicated from the point of view of a teacher. Davies (2003:197) argues we need the native speaker as **a model, a goal and an inspiration**, but he considers it useless as a **measure**, because it will not help us define the goals. The respondents in my study seemed to

partly subscribe to Davies' line of thought: the English of the native speaker can be best described as an inspiration to most.

It seems obvious that in the teaching of English the goals and models should always be relevant to the needs of the users/learners of English. The native-speaker model is said to be unattainable for the overwhelming majority of language learners in expanding circle countries. Unattainable, without doubt, but is it inappropriate as well? Who will determine what the appropriate model is? Kirkpatrick (2007:188) argues that teaching a native speaker model including inner-circle pragmatic norms and cultures is not appropriate for 'many' learners in the countries of the other circles. He (2007:184) says there are three models to choose from when it comes to language instruction:

- a) the exo-normative native speaker model
- b) the endo-normative nativized model
- c) in certain contexts, the lingua franca model

According to him, so far, all expanding circle countries have probably adopted the exonormative model. Kirkpatrick sees the reasons for choosing this model: prestige and legitimacy. In my opinion, unawareness of other alternatives also counts (if they exist). The learners themselves, by setting their own goals, are in key position. But they need to be aware of the present situation; it takes a long time before research changes practice. Moreover, we must remember that the NS model has been codified, so learners can be tested and evaluated against codified norms and standards. This, more than many other issues, is appreciated by the busy language teachers. What is more, existing English language teaching materials are mostly based on NSE norms. In the US and Britain there is a huge English language teaching and textbook industry. The choice of a native speaker model surely advantages these industries. (Kirkpatrick 2007:185). What would be the specific reasons of people for learning inner-circle models of English in Finland, professional or something else? My study implies that one of the reasons is that a language and culture are seen as belonging together.

Differences from the norm still seem to be classified as interlanguage or interference (Kirkpatrick 2007a). This was so among the interviewees in my study as well. Can the wide selection of features that EIL/ELF comprises be the foundation of an educational model then? Many linguists find it hard to accept ELF as a model, or a basis for language instruction for that matter. Again, so did the respondents in my study. Kirkpatrick (2007:193) notes:

...the many varieties of English that lingua franca speakers bring to any regional or international lingua franca interaction make it difficult to describe or codify a lingua franca model as such for the classroom. However, a lingua franca approach based on the goal of successful cross-cultural communication could be advantageous to both teachers and students.

Functional sensibility is called for by Modiano (2000) and many others. We do not have to accept all the features to the core EIL, as we know instinctively if a feature is useful in communication. Moreover, at least in the EU, most NNSEs use the language as a tool for cross-cultural communication and these people are the experts on this. This is why the competent non-native speaker of English should be actively involved in the development of EIL educational strategies, argues Modiano (*ibid.*) and Firth (2009b) subscribes to the same idea. This was also one of the motivations for my study.

However, as there is a certain wish to be able to apply ELF research pedagogically as well, I will try to sum up different views on this. First, to give teachers (and ELF speakers) an idea of what a lingua franca approach curriculum could look like, Kirkpatrick (2007:193-4) lists three things:

- Students would need to be alerted to which linguistic features cause particular problems of mutual intelligibility.
- The curriculum would need to focus on how cultures differ and the implications of such differences for cross-cultural communication (facework, appropriate request schemas).
- Students would need to be taught the communicative strategies that aid successful cross-cultural communication.

He also talks about how important it is to learn to present the speaker's **own** culture to others, besides learning about the cultures of people they are most likely to be using English with (Kirkpatrick 2007: 188). Learning about



cultures can be challenging as it is impossible to predict one's future interlocutors. Today's business life may take a person anywhere in the world. Britain and America are important business partners among others and NS English is thus part of the picture. Workplaces themselves are multicultural. It would be ideal if the English classroom prepared the learners for all cultures, but as there is not time enough to teach even the basics, this is not realistic.

Sifakis (2007: 164) also gives a few guidelines on what the English as an Intercultural Language (EiCL) syllabus should include. He says:

- it must have a genuine communicative purpose
- it must be realistic
- the learner should not be asked to be someone else, i.e. NS.
- learners should be treated as individuals

Penny Ur (2008) suggests the whole issue of native/non-native is an irrelevant question. She stresses the importance of genuinely intercultural competence: i.e. not just 'foreign' versus 'English-speaking' cultures. What is important according to her is that the language teacher is:

- a competent and fluent speaker of (World Standard) English
- a good teacher
- fluent in the learners' L1 and familiar with the learners' home culture.

She ends up claiming that English today has two major communicative functions: as the means of communication between its native speakers within a 'core' English-speaking country and as the means of international communication, anywhere in the world, a Lingua Franca. As the latter is predominant in the world today, she suggests we should focus on it in our teaching. This is a natural direction, but perhaps there is already a third dimension, a 'world culture' of international interaction evolving as well.

McKay (2002; 2003) approaches the theme by raising three important points. Firstly, she argues that English learners do not need to have native-speaker-like competence in terms of pronunciation and pragmatics. Secondly, English is used for the individual's specific purposes and communication across cultures. Thirdly, there is **no need** to obtain target language culture knowledge when teaching and learning English. The actual ELF users I my

study, however, seemed to disagree in certain aspects, although the culture of ENL countries was not considered very important in language instruction either.

Sifakis (2006: 156) talks about communication bound (C-bound) and norm bound (N-bound) approaches in communication. He argues that while in-class learning may be N-bound, real life NNS-NNS and NNS-NS communication, as well as communication between fluent and less fluent bilingual speakers is, and has always been, C-bound. This means that when these people communicate in English, their communication has key non-linguistic features and their discourse varies depending on many parameters. Sifakis says learners should be exposed to and become actively aware of as many and diverse samples of NNS discourse as possible, and acquire training in making themselves comprehensible in as many different communicative situations as with as many different types of NNS as possible. He claims this would make them skilful at making repairs, shortening their utterances, asking questions, and changing their speech tempo. Learners would thus also be exposed to NNS discourses that sacrifice linguistic precision for the benefit of intelligibility (Byram et al. 2001). Ranta (2006: 96) argues we should “re-allocate the time spent on ‘cramming’ [ENL] features and shift our focus on features which do require honing from the point of view of intelligibility”.

The subjects in my study emphasized the importance of people skills and the ability to cope with all kinds of people and all kinds of situations. Even conversation is a highly dialogic process (Dewey, 2009) and one certainly needs a lot of practice in learning to converse fluently in a foreign language. There seems to be very little static in the ELF encounters, most of it being very dynamic and unpredictable. Small talk, too, is very much dialogic in nature; it always takes two to chat and the interviewees had realized this in their work contexts. It must be noted that in international business contexts there might be heightened importance of face-saving strategies and this

might affect the accommodation process and the interlocutors attempts to successful communication (Burt 2005: 9).

Leung (2005: 139) notes:

[t]he pedagogic model for any English-teaching programme should be related to its goals in context. An idealized native-speaker model should not be an automatic first choice'.

The target audience is not primarily the native speakers of English any more but mostly non-native speakers using English as a lingua franca. And they are more unlikely to be familiar with 'Inner Circle' culture or idioms, although admittedly, there are exceptions.

Another question is whether the proficient ELF speaker can ever be a model for learners of English. Raising consciousness around the theme might be the first necessary step towards a new pedagogic strategy. But again, do the teachers have the resources to provide it to students?

There is also the NS/NNS teacher dilemma. One aspect that speaks for native speaker teachers is that they have first-hand knowledge of the culture and manners of the relevant inner-circle country. But as the situation is today, also ENL countries are likely to have a mixed multicultural population, many of whom speak a 'localised' version of their own variety of English. Also, many of the members of academic staff at universities in English as the mother tongue countries are foreigners, so the ELF interactions would be present everywhere anyway (Kirkpatrick 2007: 187). How much native culture do we really want or need to offer by the side of the actual English language, which is actually a world language?

Another issue is the teachable - learnable dilemma (e.g. Pienemann 1984). Some things just cannot be 'taught' no matter how you try. They have to be learned. (p. 139). NNS teachers often find it hard to teach idioms. Also, although it sounds natural to teach vocabulary as collocational phrases rather than individual words, the results may be counterproductive, claims

(Pulverness 2007) "... leading to learners over-using learnt 'chunks' of language in contexts and with interlocutors where they may not be appropriate." Pulverness says if we want our learners to become independent users of language who are capable of generating original utterances, we should forget attention to collocation, and "pursue a policy of benign neglect, allowing them to discover relationships among words for themselves and develop their own feel for the language rather than adopting a pre-fabricated collocation lexicon".

Some NNS teachers avoid teaching pronunciation because they feel inadequate and inferior to NSs as models. With a solid foundation like LFC (or any other similar proposals in the future), and the phonetic parameter having been made more attainable, they might regain part of their confidence. Teachers also need support in pedagogical strategies in teaching pronunciation. They might hold on to their habit of teaching the native model only because they do not know what else to do or, even, what else they are 'allowed' to do. A learner-centred approach to understanding the students' interlanguage would be welcomed warmly. "The comparative fallacy" must be avoided, argues Brey-Vroman (1983:16). This, in my opinion, applies to both teachers and learners.

Modiano (2003) suggests that Euro-English will play a key roll in the Europeanization process. Consequently, it would have to influence the English classroom as well and the main focus would have to be on how to use English in cross-cultural interaction. Communication skills would certainly have to be encouraged, not the impersonation of an idealized native speaker. But, those who really want to aspire for near-native proficiency can do so, but only out of choice (and not because it is imposed upon them). Students would, consequently, focus on communicative interaction in differing forums. For example, instead of concentrating on Anglo-American institutions, they would "practice explaining their own unique social and cultural makeup to others." (Modiano, 2003: 37-38) This sounds like a potential solution to the cultural content of the English courses in Finland as

well. Modiano (2000) considers it problematic if NNS and NS language instructors adopt the kind of notions in which the native speakers of the major varieties are seen as the ones who **possess** English, as the teachers might use this view to enforce traditional practices in their ELT activities. This is a problem that the ELF movement is trying to find solutions to.

ELF speakers and learners should believe in themselves, as everyone has an accent, be it standard, mixed, or just 'a mess of some kind' (an expression used by one of my interviewees). Some of the key findings of Munro's (1999) study on non-native accents were that even heavily accented speech is sometimes perfectly intelligible and that prosodic errors appear to be a more potent force in the loss of intelligibility than phonetic. This should be comforting to the learners of English, although prosody is also a challenging area to learn. It may be exactly what the subjects in my study referred to when describing the deficiencies in ELF.

A learner of English has every right to express interest in acquiring a particular accent. However, there is some truth in Peters' (1973) remark "What interests the students may not be in the students' interests". With all the foreign TV shows and the Internet, they have plenty of authentic input available. TV shows and films were mentioned as a wonderful source of NSE (less of NNSE) input by my interviewees. No one is denying the learner to learn more, not even the ELF proponents, but for those who find it frustrating to strive towards something that seems to be unachievable, i.e. NS skills, a new kind of goal might give another perspective at learning.

Cross-linguistic influence is a fact. Widdowson (as cited in Kirkpatrick 2007) argues that instead of separating the L1 and the L2, we should work to get these two **into contact** in our learners. It would be enlightening to hear how this is done constructively in real life. More so as the interviewees in my study seemed to think the most disturbing factor in a speaker's language is a strong influence from their native language.

How to proceed if one wants to find out how the learners would take a different approach to learning English? Sifakis (2007: 162) lists questions that the teacher can ask the student in order to find out to what extent the individual learner is willing to be taught the communication-bound way. These questions include things like whether they study to pass an exam or to communicate with people around the world, whether they are afraid of mistakes, and whether they ask to be corrected when they make a mistake etc. He says that if their perspective is norm-bound it might be difficult to teach EicL. A more traditional approach might work better. My study, I think confirmed this, but it might be possible to change the attitudes in the long run. If we think about the situation in Finland I would dare to argue that most learners still appear N-bound, at least at a more advanced level. The interviewees in my study, too, seemed to be drawn by the native speaker model. Nevertheless, it is their intention to communicate with people from all over the world and not just native speakers. It must be partly their language learning history that makes them to some extent norm-bound. Years of NS-based language instruction cannot be forgotten in a second and society's stereotypes and attitudes form their thoughts. The social status of British or American English plays a role as well. Holliday (2008: 128-129) claims we could well think of British English as a saleable product, comparable to the Burberry brand, a form of English among others. Raising awareness among students is thus necessary, I agree with Sifakis in this. After all, teachers are still expected to give their students models, standards and guidelines to follow.

## 7 CONCLUSION

All in all, I believe the ELF approach has the potential to lead to much deeper understanding of the speakers of Englishes in the world. Whether it leads to any concrete changes in language, pedagogy etc. remains to be seen. So far, it seems new goals have not filtered down to the learners/speakers. It is up to the students to define their 'ultimate goals' and up to the teachers to help them realise those goals in various contexts. This is why both learners and teachers should be made aware of all the choices. We might soon have a generation of ELF-native citizens among us – if we do not already have it. A more thorough understanding of the perspectives of the professionals using English as their vehicular language might enable us to prepare future professionals for the global working life in the future.

The overarching goal of this study has been to study the self-perceived attitudes and identities of Finns with English as their working language. The focus was on studying their attitudes to different varieties of English and whether they regard themselves as speakers of ELF- a variety of English. I hope that the limited findings will help shed light on what it is like to work in a language that is not one's native language among a group of people in the same situation. I also hope this study adds a little to ELF research, at least some insight to the corporate ELF users' point of view.

My study shows that there is linguistic curiosity even in NNSs. Getting your message through is important, but it is not the whole truth as there are higher ambitions as well. These ambitions do not necessarily mirror wishes to become like a NS of English, rather a wish to reach a more 'artistic' level of English. In a multinational workplace one uses and has an opportunity to learn both standard English and ELF. Classrooms so far aim at standard variety of English; in this sense the workplace is a better learning environment.

The interviewees in my study seem to have realized that what is intelligible in ELF exchanges is not always what a native would consider good English. In other words, they see the robustness of the language. This finding is supported by earlier research. Munro (2006: 115) says there is no reason to assume that native listeners' responses are representative of the reactions that might come from the actual target linguistic community. Thus the evaluations of native listeners are not necessarily any more meaningful than NNS interlocutors' evaluations. However, the ELF users themselves often value, and sometimes even fear, the opinion of the native speaker. It would be interesting to study to what extent the feedback from their teachers, present or former, and their language learning history, is the cause for this. It looks like the attitude change in regard to standards and models should start from the early years of language education: otherwise it might be too much to expect that the NNSEs could act as the agents of change. Native speaker proficiency is still a highly valued skill, but some of the interviewees in my study seem to think an NS accent only 'becomes' Finns who have spent a longer time in an ENL country.

All in all, the notion of "mastering" a foreign language is still a fuzzy notion and so think the respondents. Van Parijs describes the impossibility of reaching total fluency:

Once the basic syntax and morphology are learned, hundreds of hours may be needed for tiny improvements in pronunciation, fluency, use of idiomatic expressions and respect of grammatical exceptions, as well as for expanding one's lexical repertoire. (Van Parijs 2007: 74)

We still do not know what we should do to allow the long-lived myth of non-natives speaking like natives to become reality, and perhaps ELF gives us a reason not to continue keeping up this myth. The subjects in my study seem to be quite satisfied with their proficiency, even though it is not even near native-like, at least for all of them. What ELF-using professionals seem to need are listener-friendly attitudes in ELF and ELF-ENL interaction. It seems that ELF speakers, like the interviewees in the study, excel at this because they are able to identify with people communicating in a foreign



language. Nonetheless, they are sometimes irritated by a heavy L1-affected accent or ungrammatical features (with respect to L1 English). Notably, these negative connotations exist even though intelligibility is not impeded. This was an interesting finding and worth studying in the future. More accommodation effort from the part of the native speakers would also be appreciated; it seems they must be reminded of its necessity.

Canagarajah (2007: 925) suggests we distinguish between competence and proficiency. This would help us to see that both ELF speakers and NSs have **competence** in their respective varieties, even though there is no limit to the development of their **proficiency** through experience and time. To take an example: I was struck by how odd it sounded when an actor in TV-series, a NNS speaker of Finnish, had obviously been asked to speak his lines the way NS Finnish actors spoke theirs. The artificial fluency and intonation spoiled the actor's own, no doubt perfectly sufficient pronunciation of Finnish. The intention must have been to erase his foreign accent, but he ended up sounding more like a robot. My subjects hinted at the same problem when talking about the unnecessary attempts of some Finns to deliberately sound like NSs of English.

Generating a new variety of English with independent norms that express a nation's cultural heritage is a time-consuming and primarily subconscious process, claims Schell (2008: 4). The subjects in my study wondered if it really is possible to treat ELF as an entirely independent variety of English. If it is, it will certainly be a time-consuming job to increase 'ELF awareness' in the language learners, speakers and teachers and perhaps even harder to achieve their total acceptance. I hope that the notion of ELF is not just another 'emperor's new clothes' syndrome. Would it be possible to accept the fact that people do not necessarily achieve perfect (not necessarily meaning NS) knowledge of a foreign language, although most of us try our best? ELF - as a notion- is an interesting milestone the subjects in my study can appreciate to a certain extent, but they find it hard to accept it ever functioning as a model or an endpoint - much the same way many scholars still think.

In the present situation the natives are still 'playing at home' and the ELF speakers are 'playing away'. Someone said that a timer in our hand we end up measuring things in language learning that perhaps should not be measured at all. Canagarajah (2005: 42) notes:

What is required is a more flexible view of language, a more pluralistic approach to competence... and an understanding of the need for multiple proficiencies in the communication of linguistic resources – or perhaps a 'multi-norm', 'post-method' approach.

The question remains: what and when should we be teaching and perhaps even more importantly, what **should** we **not** be teaching to the learners of English in Finland, in classrooms as well as in the workplace? I do not think we compare a NN Finnish speaker with a NS of Finnish or expect her to reach a native speaker level. Has English become the 'de facto language' and proficiency in it is judged differently than other languages? We could regard ELF as an attainable and sufficient language without having to think of it as a norm. Naturally, teaching standard native English does not mean it is imposed on the learners either. It seems that adult learners, at least, are able to define their own goals sufficiently and according to what is possible or necessary for each individual. There is no shortcut to language proficiency and if ELF was to become a new model, it might be 'another exonormative norm, imposed from outside, and not developed locally within communities of usage' (Canagarajah, 2006:208). Instead, Canagarajah recommends orientating to English as a hybrid language, as a multinational language that constitutes diverse norms and systems. He says we need a paradigm shift in the teaching of English and instead of trying to teach every variety of English we have to **change our understanding of language learning**. He suggests we teach in terms of a repertoire of language competence instead of the present 'target language' terms. This includes making our students sensitive to other varieties of English. (p. 209-210). The subjects in my study and many like them are already immersed in this kind of learning environment.

It seems ELF research so far does not answer the issue of how we can help our students to learn International English. However, there is a new generation of young people in Finland who are extremely proficient in English/varieties of English at a very early age. This is not only because of efficient instruction, but also because of the amount of linguistic input through media and the Internet and a capability to absorb information from them. They do, in fact, communicate even with native speakers of English, online and in real life. Because of this they crave for idiomatic phrases, colourful expressions and trendy vocabulary, without any external imposing.

This study could, of course, have been more concise and focused. On the other hand, I wanted to give a general picture of the situation today and the controversial discourse on ELF demands a wider perspective. Also, a larger number of respondents would have given more reliability to the study. However, in-depth interviews with a large group would have been impossible in this case. Instead I thank the participants in my study for their valuable time and comments.

All in all, it is clear that ELF/EIL is a fruitful area of research. A future research could deal, for example, with the attitudes of school-age learners of English towards their ELF usage, and how ELF affects their attitudes towards learning other foreign languages. As for workplace ELF communication, it would be interesting to study the suggested unequal power positions of NSs and NNSEs to further improve dialogue across cultures and international varieties of English. Most of all, it will be fascinating to follow future research into ELF as empirical evidence replaces anecdotal evidence. The growing body of descriptive ELF research that is now becoming available will benefit the field as a whole. I hope that ELF will become a meaningful notion for those it is designed for, not just another code to follow. As for now, the competent English users speak for themselves.

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## APPENDIX 1: Theme interview structure

### TEEMAHAASTATTELUN RUNKO

Toivon, että kerrot seuraavista aihealueista täysin omiin tuntemuksiisi perustuen. Kunkin teeman alla on apukysymyksiä, mutta niihin tai niiden järjestykseen ei tarvitse pitäytyä, vaan voit vapaasti tuoda esiin omat näkökulmasi asioihin. Apukysymyksiin ei siis ole oikeita eikä vääriä vastauksia ja olennaisinta onkin vain vastata **mahdollisimman rehellisesti** ja mahdollisimman paljon **esimerkeihin** havainnollistaen. Kerro siis mieleesi tulevat asiat vapaasti omin sanoin ja siinä järjestyksessä kuin haluat.

Haastattelu tapahtuu suomeksi ja vastaat suomeksi. Lopulliseen työhön mahdollisesti päätyvät sitaatit käännetään englanniksi, sillä tutkimuksen kieli on englanti.

Yksi aihealueista ja siihen liittyvät kysymykset otetaan esille vasta itse haastattelussa. Siihen et siis saa alustavia apukysymyksiä ollenkaan.

Haastateltavien anonymiteetti säilytetään. Haastattelujen analyysissä teemat järjestetään uudelleen todellisia, esille tulevia teemoja noudattaviksi.

### AIHEPIIRI 1: OMA KIELITAITO / HYVÄ TAI HUONO KIELITAITO / SUJUVA KOMMUNIKOINTI

1. Minkälainen on englannin kielen kielitaitosi omasta mielestäsi/ muiden mielestä? Voit käyttää apuna esim. tässä alla olevaa sanallista kuvailua tai määrittellä kielitasosi muulla haluamallasi tavalla:

*“poor” - “beginner” - “can make myself understood” - “fairly good” - “good enough” - “better than most” - “almost native speaker level” - “fluent” - “native speaker-like” - “excellent”*

- Jos liitteenä olevasta taitotasotaulukosta on apua, voit kertoa myös sen avulla taidoistasi, mutta tämä ei ole millään tavalla välttämätöntä.
2. Kuvaile miten tyytyväinen olet tämänhetkiseen englannin kielen taitotasosi. Perustele. Onko kielitaitosi kehittynyt koko ajan? Kuinka suuri merkitys omassa työssäsi on kielitaidolla suhteessa muihin taitoihin?
  3. Kuvaile minkälaisista on hyvä englannin kielen taito/sujuva englannin kielellä tapahtuva kommunikointi / hyvä englannin kielen puhuja. (yleisesti ja/tai omassa työssäsi). Kuvaile vastaavasti minkälainen on huono englannin kielen puhuja tai kommunikointi (yleisesti ja/tai omassa työssäsi). Anna halutessasi esimerkkejä. Miten hyvä kielitaito saavutetaan?
  4. Oletko saanut kielikoulutusta työssäsi/oloaikaasi?

### AIHEPIIRI 2: ENGLANNIN ERI AKSENTEISTA JA VARIETEETEISTA JA ASEENTEET NIIHIN

5. Mitä eri englannin varieteetteja tunnet? Mikä niistä miellyttää/ärsyttää eniten ja onko tällä merkitystä? Mitä varieteetteja kohtaat työssäsi? Onko joku näistä varieteeteista muita miellyttävämpi/tavoittelemisen arvoinen? Onko joitain näistä helpompi/vaikeampi ymmärtää kuin muita?



6. Minkälaista varieteettia koet itse puhuvasi tai minkälainen aksentti itselläsi on (jos on)? Oletko tyytyväinen omaan aksenttiisi? Mitä haluaisit muuttaa? Miksi?
7. Vaikuttaako puhekeskustelu/ aksentti siihen miten kulloinkin puhut englantia? Millä tavoin? Minkälaisiin seikkoihin kiinnität huomiota puhekeskustelusi käyttämässä englannin kielessä /miksi?/ mihin et juuri kiinnitä huomiota?
8. Minkälaisia erilaisia ongelmia/haasteita on keskustelussa syntyneiden englannin puhujien kanssa ja toisaalta ei-syntyneiden englannin puhujien kanssa? Onko niitä ylipäättänsä?

### AIHEPIIRI 3: OMA TYÖYHTEISÖ JA SINÄ ITSE ENGLANNIN KIELEN KÄYTTÄJÄNÄ

9. Millaisia yhteisiä/yleisiä piirteitä mielestäsi yhteisössänne työskentelevien käyttämässä englannin kielessä on (jos on)? Jos tällaisia piirteitä on, miten ne näkyvät omassa kielenkäytössäsi (jos näkyvät)?
10. Mistä katsot saavasi englannin kielen mallisi? Vertailetko ylipäättään omaasi ja muiden käyttämää englantia? Pelkäätkö koskaan muiden arvostelemaan englannin kieltäsi?
11. Voisiko mielestäsi oma englantisi toimia normina/mallina muille? Ajatteletko, että niin tapahtuukin? Miksi/Miksi ei? Kenelle?

### AIHEPIIRI 4: OMAT TAVOITTEET ENGLANNIN KIELITÄIDON SUHTEEN

12. Mikä on tavoitteesi englannin kielitaidon suhteen? Pitkän aikavälin/lyhyen aikavälin tavoitteet? Kuka/mikä tavoitetasoa määrittelee? Mitä pystyt tekemään englannin kielellä nyt ja toisaalta - mitä **haluaisit** nyt/tulevaisuudessa pystyä tekemään? Mitkä englannin kielen käyttöön liittyvät asiat koet ongelmallisiksi jokapäiväisessä työssäsi? Miten mahdolliseksi koet näiden tavoitteiden saavuttamisen? Minkälaisia esteitä tavoitteiden saavuttamiselle koet olevan? Kerro esimerkiksi miten ja mistä syistä koet kielitaitosi kehittyneen/taantuneen/pysyneen paikallaan tähän mennessä.
13. Minkälaiset asiat auttaisivat/auttavat sinua saavuttamaan haluamasi kielitaidon (millainen koulutus, millainen työympäristö, omat ominaisuudet jne.) ?

### AIHEPIIRI 5: AFFEKTIIVISET TEKIJÄT

14. Käytät englantia erilaisissa konteksteissa. Minkälaisessa ryhmässä/tilanteissa/tehtävissä koet olevasi vahvimmillasi/haavoittuvimmillasi englannin kielen käyttäjänä?
15. Miten suhtaudut ongelmatilanteisiin englannin kielen käyttötilanteissa (esim. kun et saa itseäsi ymmärretyksi tai et itse ymmärrä puhekeskustelua)? Kerro esimerkkejä. Mikä olisi pahinta, mitä voisit kuvitella tapahtuvan tällaisissa tilanteissa? Miten olet nähnyt muiden toimivan ongelmatilanteissa? Mikä olisi hyvä ratkaisu ongelmatilanteisiin? Kuinka usein ongelmatilanteita ylipäättään on ja mistä ne mielestäsi johtuvat?
16. Vältteletkö tietoisesti omassa kielenkäytössäsi jotain (esim. tiettyjä rakenteita, äänneitä, small talkia tms.)? Miksi? Minkälainen on mielestäsi rohkea kielenkäyttäjä? Otatko kielellisiä riskejä? Koetko, että persoonasi pysyy samana,

eli käyttäytydyt samalla tavalla, käytit sitten englantia tai äidinkieltäsi? Kuvaile, jos koet muutoksia tapahtuvan.

17. Oletko ajatellut, mikä kielellinen roolisi/identiteettisi englannin kieltä työssä käyttäessäsi on? Oletko 'vieraan kielen opiskelija', 'vieraan kielen käyttäjä', 'kompetentti työkielen käyttäjä', 'kielenkäyttäjät toisten joukossa', 'oppipoika'... (keksi oma määritelmä!). Vai oletko tilanteesta riippuen eri rooleissa? Miten tämä ilmenee eri tilanteissa? Miksi?
18. Voit vielä miettiä kokonaisvaltaista suhtautumistasi englannin kieleen yrityksen yhteisenä virallisena kielenä. Merkitse janalle missä olet.

<negatiivinen\_\_\_\_\_positiivinen>

#### AIHEPIIRI 6: ELF; esiteltiin vasta varsinaisen haastattelun yhteydessä

Aluksi haastateltavalle kerrotaan lyhyesti mitä ELF:lla ymmärretään, mainitaan mm. LFC. Sitten häntä pyydetään kertomaan ajatuksiaan lingua franca englannin käsitteestä ja mitä se olisi käytännössä ja miten he sen kokevat sekä sen mahdollisesta asemasta uutena normina. Haastateltavaa pyydetään myös kuvailemaan itseään ja asenteitaan ELF:n puhujana.

## APPENDIX 2: Interview extracts in Finnish

(1) ...ehkä kun mä oon parantunut niin mä oon päässy semmoseen foorumeihin puhumaan ja mä oon uskaltanut avata suuni ja sitä kautta sillä voi olla merkitystä myös uralle, eli se onkin isompi juttu kuin mitä mä ajattelin.

(2) No ei siinä kovin kauheita kriteerejä ole, jos onnistuu ilmaisemaan ajatuksensa niin että siinä ei jää mitään epäselvyyttä ja jolla ei ole mitään ärsyttäviä manereita. Ja sen verta laaja ilmaisuvarasto että, että ei ole ihan kauhee supp... pystyy hieman vivahteikkaammin niitä asioita ilmaisemaan.(P1)

(3) Työasioissa se aihepiiri on hiukan rajoittuneempi, että kun puhutaan varsinaisesti suoraan työasioista, silloin ei niin kauheeta ongelmaa ole. Mutta sitten, jos mennään puhumaan jostain niistä näistä niin sitten tulee taas ne rajotukset vastaan. Esimerkiksi semmosista arkipäivän asioista kauhean hyvin osaa puhua, koska en mä en ole koskaan arkipäivää eläny semmosessa englanninkielisessä maassa. (P1)

(4) No siis ääntäminen ei parane. Se on sellasta suomalaisten insinöörien ääntämistä. No sit ehkä tota asiat hoitaa aina samalla tavalla elikkä kielen monipuolinen käyttö ei parane. yleensä asiat esitetään aina samalla tavalla ja kirjoitetaan slideihin samalla tavalla, se on hirveen sellasta niinku mustavalkosta jotenkin. Nyt kun mä oon käyny näillä tunneilla, ni mä oon sellasia eri variaatioita oppinu käyttää. Esim kielikuvia täällä ei juurikaan koskaan kuule. (P3)

(5) Ainoo et sit siinä on se, et kun täällä Firma X:ssä on semmosia hirveen huonoja tapoja ilmasta asioita, et niistä tulee sellanen, et niistä oppii joskus huonojakin tapoja..

(6) ...ja ne pisteet ja pilkut. Tai pisteet kyllä, mutta pilkut puuttuu, nää välimerkit. Eli ei se oo sellasta huoliteltua kieltä, eli se on aika samanlaista semmosta, ilmasee asioita samalla tavalla. (P3)

(7) Kyl ne tarttuu..kyllä yritän tietoisesti pitää pois. Siinä on lähinnä semmonen, et toistetaan jotain sanaa, jotain turhaa, täytesanaa tai sanotaan jotenkin hassusti ja heti kun sen bongaa niin: Tosta eroon! Noin ei sanota. (P2)

(8) No tää henkilö puhuu monipuolisesti, käyttää synonyymejä, ei epäröi, puhuu aika sillai selkeesti ja ei pidä taukoja. (P3)

(9) Niin mä luotan et ne puhuu oikein..Et mul on nyt paljon kavereita, työkavereita, tai paljon mut, esmes espanjalaisia ja romanialaisia ja venäläisiä ja kyllähän nekin puhuu ihan ok englantia, en mä sano sitä. Mut en mä koe, että mä oppisin niiltä niin paljon kun joltain natiivilta. Tää on se. (P3)

(10) Et mun mielestä se kielioppi pitäis olla joko sitä on tai sit sitä ei oo.

**Haastattelija:** Eli kielioppi pitäis olla sen natiivipuhujan kielioppi?

Juu kyl mä olisin enemmän sitä mieltä, ja sit jotenkin mä koen, et pitää olla brittienglantii tai amerikanenglantii, ja sit anyways joku laittaa siihen sen oman tapansa puhua.(P4)

(11) ehkä ei oo vaa semmosta tota noin niin intoo imee sitä. sitä ei koeta niin tärkeeks että...(P2)

(12) Eli se on tää tuttuus, että on jo kohdannut näitä asioita, niin sen jälkeen pystyy toimimaan, muuttamaan omaakin käyttäytymistä, tietää et puhe tai se tapa millä asiat sanotaan ei tarkoita kaikille samaa. (P2)

(13) Kyl se ois ihan hyvä et tulis se tosielämä vastaan koska harvemmin sitä on ...kyl mä teen töitä amerikkalaisten kans ja Englannin englantilaisten kans, mut enenevässä määrin ne on jotain muita ihmisiä, ni kyl se ois hyvä sitä kuullunymmärtämistä just harjoitella ja kuulla miten ne puhuu. Joku intialainenkin vähemmän englantia opiskellut... ni on se aika erilaista, et siihen vois kyl valmentaa jollain tasolla. (P2)

(14) No mikä jottei: siis ihmisyyden ja ihmisen kunnioittaminen pitäis olla joka kulttuurissa ja maassa ja toistensa kunnioittaminen ja yleinen niinku kunnioitusperiaate kaikkia kohtaan. Ja ehkä tällanen ympäristön kunnioitus myös. Et resurssit on rajalliset ja tää maapallo on rajallinen et sitäkin kautta semmosta normistoa sinne. (P4)

(15) Niin sanastollisesti, et se puhe kulkee ja näin, mut niiden sanojen ääntämiseen, siihen ei hirveesti paneuduta. Et se on... ne on ne kaksi sanaa: [ˈdeveloopment] ja [ˈteknolotsi]! (NAURAA) (P2)

(16) Tiedä siis...Siis kaikkihan haittaa, siis ääntämys jossa on vaikea ymmärtää, siis ei se tarvii olla huono, vaan se on niin, että minä en ymmärrä sitä.. (P1)

(17) Mä oon luullu että se on vaan vitsi että kiinalaisilta puuttuu, tai on vaikee sanoa jotain äänteitä, mutta kyllä sitten kun mä joku kerta tajusin miksi mun on niin kauheen vaikee ymmärtää tuota kaveria, niin kerta kaikkiaan sieltä ei tule jotain äännettä niin sen takia mulla on vaikeuksia. Toinen on sit se, et sitten heidän kieliopin osaaminen on usein kans vähän heikkoa. Virheet mitä ne tekee on erilaisia kuin kotona mihin on tottunut. (P1)

(18)...ettei niinku monet FirmaX:n insinöörit niin käyttää...listaa asioita ja sit ilmoittaa sen jälkeen, että *whatever!* Niin se ottaa aina erittäin pahasti korvaan, että mä sanon, et älä sano noin. Sehän niinkun osoittaa, et ei mua itse asiassa kiinnosta tää homma ollenkaan et mitä se toinen ajattelee...(P2)

(19) Harvemmin niitä englannin kielen innovaatioita muuta kuin englannin kielisiltä tulee mutta... (NAURAA) (P1)

(20) **Haastattelija:** Niin eli siis sä olet tyytyväinen vasta sitten kun...mitä?

No olis tietysti...mullon aina se, että niin kauan kuin ei puhu niinku paikalliset..

**Haastattelija:** Niin ketkä paikalliset?

No lähinnä puhun brittienglannista, koska sitä on niinku opetettu. (P4)

(21) Mun mielestä se on vaan typerää nyökkäillä ja antaa ymmärtää ymmärtävänsä asia! (P2)

(22) ... mut jos on oikein tosikuiva sellanen rfd insinööri, et ei oo mitään intonaatiota eikä mitään, et se vaan puhuu monotoonisesti ni mun kyl täytyy sanoa, et mulla kyllä kiinnostus loppuu. Kyllä sil on merkitystä. (P3)

(23) Se on aina, et jos on pelkästään et mä oon ainoa ei-natiivi englannin puhuja paikalla niin sit mua hermostuttaa ...nusta tuntuu että mä oon altavastaajana. Vaikka tietäisit asiasta niin silti, että niitten on helpompi kuitenkin käyttää niitä kaiken maailman pikkuvivahteita ja tulla ..mut sitten kun siinä on ne muut suomalaiset, ruotsalaiset intialaiset niin sillan mä katson et me ollaan kaikki samalla viivalla. Koska joku puhuu...kukaan ei hallitse sitä täysin ja vaikka hallitsiskin ni silti. (P2)

(24) Se vaatii tosi paljon omistautuneisuutta [natiivin kielitason saavuttaminen]. (P2)

(25) Mä oon tällä hetkellä siinä vaiheessa, et mä en haluu niinku alkaa ns. matkii tai tavoittelee mitään natiiviääntämystä, jotain UK:sta tai USA juttuja...jotakin voi tietysti sellasta et puhuu sujuvasti, mut et mä alkasin puhua niinku ne UK:laiset, ni must se tuntus teennäiseltä. Voi olla et mä oon siinä vaiheessa et se vielä tuntuu siltä, että tai jos mä asuisin siellä hetken, ni sit se ehkä olis varmaan ihan luonnollista, mut jos mä nyt alkasin puhua yhtäkkiä, ni se ei tuntus luontevalta. (P3)

(26) Jos mä tarkasti mietin ni tota se riippuu, et jos on siellä maassa asunut ja ollu. Mul on nimittäin kokemuksia monista tai molemmista. mul on hyvä ystävä, joka oli asunut Briteissä pitkään ni se oli ihan ok ku se puhui sitä mut sit mä tiedän myöskin ihmisiä jotka ei oo siellä asunut ja ne yrittää sitä puhua, ni se kuulostaa vähän sellaselta matkimiselta. (P3)

(27) Jos vaikka englanninkieliset lähtee ja jatketaan suomeksi syntyperäisten kesken, niin silloin niinku keskustelu vähän muuttuu...Siitä tulee vähän semmosta vähän niinku ...no tietysti se vapautuu hieman, koska kaikki ovat niinku kotimaaperällä ja. Sitten en mä tiedä...vaikuttaako se sitten lopputulokseen hirveesti...tuleeko siitä parempia tuloksia, mutta jos nyt ainakin jotakin esteitä häivyttää se...se vajavainen ilmaisutaito voi olla hankala...(P1)

(28) Mä yleensä korjaan juuri tätä minun mieheni puheesta kun hän saattaa sanoa 'she send me an email'. Sit mä oon: 'she **sends** you an email!' Ni mä yleensä sen korjaan, se häiritsee mua ihan suunnattomasti. (P4)

(29) Mulle on opetettu käyttämään sitä [-s] ja vaikka mä en itse aina muistakaan sitä, niin mä huomaan kyl jos se puuttuu sieltä. Se ottaa pahasti korvaan.(P1)

(30) ... kyl mä ymmärrän, mut se korvaan särähtää, et se pitää olla siellä. (P1)

(31) Mun ensimmäinen reaktio on, et ei ole.

**Interviewer:** Miksi ensimmäinen reaktio on että ei ole?

Kun siel on kuitenkin ne omat varieteetit: intialaiset puhuu eri lailla ja suomalaiset puhuu eri lailla ja mikä siellä ois se yhdistävä tekijä. Toki mä tosta sitten luen eteenpäin et siellä on niitä yhdistäviä tekijöitä, mut en mä oikein koe että tällasta on! Ei en mä kyllä koe et siel niin paljon niitä yhteisiä asioita on, mut en mä oo kyllä koskaan ajatellutkaan tämmöstä, et tää on aika mielenkiintoinen asia. Se voi olla että mä muutan mielipiteeni pikkuhiljaa! (P4)

(32) Niin mutta kun ne kaikki puhuu sitä kuitenkin eri tavalla, eri lailla, siinä ei ole sellasta logiikkaa..

(33) Mulle tulee joku kielen köyhtyminen tästä mieleen.(P3)

(34) Tässäkin mulle tuli heti ekaks, että ei oteta tällasia malleja, et mun mielestä miksi se pitäis ottaa sinne? Kaikesta tulis samanlaista jotenkin. Mä koen et miks ne kulttuuriset ja eri vivahteet ja miks ne haluttais laittaa samaan purkkiin...jotenkin se kaavottaa liikaa meitä. (P4)

(35) ...jos ajattelee, voisihan se olla, että kun koulussa (kerroin siitä, että siellä joskus mainittiin eroja sitten britti englannin ja amerikan englannin välillä) niin jos se sitten on, että opetetaan sitä tommosta yleisenglantia ja todetaan kuriositeettina, että britit ja amerikkalaiset pistävät ässän tonne kolmanteen persoonan perään, että ei se mikkää ihme...(P1)

(36) Mä tiedän et semmosta on, mut mä en kannata et sitä opetettais, koska se ei oo sitä oikeeta. Ehkä tulee varmaan tästä et mä oon niinkauan ollu FirmaA:ssa, et mun on varmaan aivopesty

et asiat tehdään hyvin ja oikein ja oikeita asioita. Ni se sotii jotenkin mun arvomaailmaa vastaa et tälläisiä feikkijuttuja niinku opetettais. Oikeesti..mun mielestä on hyvä et ihmiset osaa hyvin omaa äidinkieltään ja sit, jos ne opettelee jotain muuta ne opettelee sitä oikeeta. (P3)

(37) Mutta mä en halua sitä, et mulle opetettais ns. epätäydellistä kieltä.(P2)

(38) On se pikkasen...kyllä mä oon aika konservatiivinen näissä asioissa! (P4)

(39) Niin no riippuu...mä en olis tyytyväinen, mä haluaisin sen sanoa, sanoa mitä mä tarkoitan niin hyvin ja selkeästi ja vähän melkein virheettömästi. Ja mä oletan et mulle kerrotaan ja puhutaan kans virheetöntä englantia tyyliin...mut se on vaan mun luonnekysymys. (NAURAA) (P4)

(40) Kyl tos pöydäs istu äsken ranskalainen kaveri, ni kyl se oli mun mielestä ranskalaista englantia enemmän kuin Euroopan englantia. Meil on meidän oma tankeroenglanti ja mun mielest on vielä pitkä matka niinku Euroopan englantiin. (P4)

(41) No mä en itse asiassa, jos miettii jotain saksalaisten puhumaa englantia tai ranskalaisten puhumaa englantia, ainakin ääntämisestä sen kuulee heti, et mun mielestä ei ole yhteistä sellasta eurooppalaista. (P2)

(42) et just nää kielikoulutukset on auttanut mua siihen[olemaan ahdistumatta natiivienkaan kanssa]. ja sit kun uskaltaa myöntää et ei osaa tai ei ymmärrä..se aika paljon madaltaa sitä stressiä (P3)

(43) Kyl mä koen, et mä oon sellanen käyttäjä opiskelija (NAURAA) (P4)

(44) Joo ja must on kauheen kiva kuulla, kun on joku esitelmä, jossa ne keskustelee keskenään tai muuta niin siinä ehtii silleen pistää asioita ylös ja kyllä mä saatan pistääkin asioita ylös. Tai mä saatan pongata sieltä jonkun jutun ja kysyä et mikä tää oli, et kyllä mä niitä hyödynnän. (P3)

(45) No kyl se mistä mä mainitsin... Joskus kun rupee tuntuu siltä että joku syntyperäinen rupee pottuilemaan kielen takia. Se kyllä jurppii niin että sillon tekee mieli vaihtaa suomeen ja kysyä sitten, että mitä nyt sitten? (P1)

(46) Just tää, että se aiheuttaa sen ikävän vastareaktion, että tota ei täällä nyt....Kielitaitoako täällä arvostellaan vai mistä täällä puhutaan.. harvoin niitä tulee mutta joskus...joskus. enkä muista että onko niitä nyt töissä tullut vai jossain muualla. (P1)

(47) Kyl sen pitäis olla vähän enemmän...[ kieli ei saa olla vain työn väline]!

**Haastattelija:** Ja koetko, että sun kielitaito on ehkä vähän enemmän?

Saattaa olla, tai mä ainakin yritän.. Kuvittelin puhuvani enemmän...(P2)

(48) En. Mä oon paljon ystävällisempi ja huomaavaisempi [englanniksi] ja käytän konditionaalia ja mä oon ihan erilainen... (P3)

(49) ...mut se on ainakin: mullakin se kääntyy vähän vastaan, et suomessakin alkaa sanoo, et voisitko ja tulisitko... mä rupesin miettii et mistä tää tulee. Se tulee siitä englannista! (P3)

(50) Mä oon kyllä oikeesti mun mielestäni ujo sosiaalisissa tilanteissa, ni kyl mä ehkä englannin kielellä sit löydän enemmän niinkun asioita tai enemmän sitä sanottavaa sille siihen tilanteeseen. Et kyl mä ehkä eläväisempi oon englannin kielellä kuin suomen kielellä. (P4)

(51) Ja sit sillä [englannin puhumisella] saa ehkä semmosen excusen tai tekosyyyn olla vähän suomalainen juro ja jössikkä, kun se ei oo kuitenkaan luonnollista se englannin kieli...se on ehkä helpompaa olla siinä tilanteessa, kun tää ei oo niinku luonnollinen tilanne ja se vastapuolikin tietää et toi ei oo luonnollinen tilanne niin sitä kautta siinä voi olla helpompaa olla...(P4)

(52) ... mä huomasin ensimmäistä kertaa vertailua. Mä huomasin sitä ensimmäistä kertaa ja se tavallaan toi sitä painetta, että se ihminen on asunut Jenkeissä.(P3)

(53) Niin just joo. Se mulle on joskus tullu. En mä oo niinku loukkaantunut enkä mitään, mutta ajattelen, et mitähän kaikkea tuo muuta osaa puhua. Että helppohan ton on sitä englantia puhua! (P3)

(54) Ei mut mun mielestä se [NSE:n ylivoimaasema] pitäis kyllä kyseenalaistaa koska varsinkin tämmösessä kulttuurissa missä me ollaan....et jossain workshopissa ne ottaa aika paljon valtaa, kun se on englannin kieli, ja sit kun osaa sitä oikein hyvin puhua. Ja saattaa olla et joku suomalainen, joka ihan oikeesti tietäis tästä asiasta enemmän saattaa olla ihan hiljaa, eikä sano mitään..Et se on mun mielestä oikeasti vaarallista. Tietenkin se on haaste meille, et meidän pitäis vaan puhua sitä ja sanoo vaikka me puhutaan miten puhutaan. Et hirveen helposti se menee niinku, et siel on enemmän äänessä ne englantilaiset...(P2)

(55) En mä tommosta kyllä ole ajatellut. Joo niin ..

Interviewer: Teillähän on yliote.

Niin niin. (hiljaisuus) Itsetuntoa..niin niin juu. (P3)

(56) Se on aina, et jos on pelkästään, et mä oon ainoa ei-natiivi englannin puhuja paikalla, niin sit mua hermostuttaa. Musta tuntuu, et mä oon altavastaaajana. Vaikka tietäisit asiasta, niin silti niiden on helpomoi kuitenkin käyttää niitä kaikenmaailman pikkuvivahteita ja tulla...Mut sitten, kun siinä on ne muut suomalaiset, ruotsalaiset, intialaiset, niin silloin mä katson, et me ollaan kaikki samalla viivalla. Koska joku puhuu, kukaan ei hallitse sitä täysin, ja vaikka hallitsisikin niin silti.

(57) ... ja siinä on 'passion for innovation' niin se passion on suomalaisille aika sellanen haastava sana- intohimo- ei täällä keskiverto insinööriätkä mikään *passion* ole, ja tämmöset voi aiheuttaa semmosta turhautumista. (P3)

(58) ... meillä on jotain tämmösiä statementtiä ollut, että "olen ylpeä omasta esimiehestäni" ni suomalaiset varmaan nyt ajattelee, et olenpa ylpeä esimiehestäni! Mut jollekin jenkille se voi olla niinku tosi, että vautsi kun on hyvä tyyppi ja ihana...(P3)

(59) Tai sitten joku express feelings tai emotions. Feelings on ehkä helpompi mutta emotions on jo semmonen niinku, et se vaatis tunne-elämää, ni se on vähän haasteellisempaa suomalaiselle. (P3)

(60) ...kommunikointi on sellasta däng, däng, däng ja silti kuitenkin asiat pysyy kasassa. Miesten kans mennään agendan mukaan ja järjestyksessä...(P3)

(61) Koen, et se on jotenkin semmosta ykstoikkosta. Se ois kiva, kun ois... ittekin ois kiva, kun miettis jonkun eri sanan eikä käyttäisi samaa sanaa, ja sit siinä oppiikin samalla, et siin on sekin hyöty. (P3)

(62) ...ei se kielenkäyttö, se kieli, ole siinä se asia, vaan se sisältö, jota yritetään välittää. (P1)

(63) Eli mikäs tämmönen ELF:n kulttuuri sitten vois olla tai identiteetti? Se on varmaan joku maailmankansalaisen identiteetti! (P4)