"We try to to to speak all the time in easy sentences" – Student conceptions of ELF interaction

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Abstract

University students who study in international contexts regularly use English as a lingua franca (ELF). But how do they perceive the situation? How do they describe the use of ELF? This study seeks answers to these questions by analysing students' interview accounts. The interviews were conducted with 13 students attending English-medium courses at the University of Helsinki. While a number of previous studies have focused on language learner and teacher attitudes towards ELF, this study explores how actual ELF users perceive and describe the use of ELF. The findings suggest that the students prefer L1 English and L1 English speakers as their language learning models, but appropriate ELF use is described as different from L1 English.

1 Introduction

I think it's the most important language in the world.

This is what an exchange student at the University of Helsinki replied when asked about his sentiments towards the position of English in today's world. We can see that the student perceives English as a world language, implying the necessity of being able to use English for international contacts. Considering that the growing proportion of international communication in English has been estimated to take place between non-native speakers of English (e.g. Crystal 2004), that is, in lingua franca contexts, this leads us to the question: how do people view the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF)?

A number of studies have been conducted on awareness of and attitudes towards ELF, many of which have concentrated on the views of either practicing or prospective English teachers (e.g. Decke-Cornill 2003, Jenkins 2007, Seidlhofer & Widdowson 2003), language learners (e.g. Matsuda 2003), or both (e.g. Hakala 2007, Ranta 2004, 2010, Timmis 2002). The focus has tended to be on people's attitudes towards different varieties of English and their preferences over one or the other, as well as their views as to what kind of English should be taught. The studies suggest that while native varieties still seem to be preferred as models, attitudes are changing towards, for example, different second language (L2) accents of English. By focusing on language teachers and learners, however, the studies can tell us little about the views of people who use ELF daily, and for whom ELF is a reality, rather than a future possibility, or an aspect of the subject they are teaching. Language teachers and learners have a completely different relationship towards ELF than do people who

regularly use ELF. For the former, English is the object of study; for the latter, a (necessary) means of communication. In addition, language teachers and learners may or may not have experiences of actual ELF encounters, and if little or no experiences of ELF, it may be difficult to imagine what ELF communication is like, and consequently it may be difficult to imagine what it could mean for English teaching. What is more, with their focus on attitudes, the above studies are limited in what they can tell us beyond the informants' preferences. Charting the attitudinal atmosphere serves us only in so far as we can observe broader tendencies and changes, and can react accordingly. But how do people describe their experiences of using English in ELF settings, and what does that reveal about their views?

An example of a study that focuses on informants who regularly use ELF is Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen (2010), who discuss business professionals' perceptions of using English in their work. The findings of the study suggest that the informants take a very pragmatic view of English: its use is considered "simply work" (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen 2010: 207). Also, two ethnographic studies, one focusing on ELF in a German multinational company (Ehrenreich 2010) and another one on an international hotel management programme in Austria (Smit 2010), report on their informants' perceptions of using ELF. Both studies emphasise socialisation into specific communities of practice (see Wenger 1999) – also language-wise – and the participants' accounts on the primacy of business and study goals. These findings reflect the difference between language teachers and learners for whom ELF is an abstraction, and ELF users who communicate in the lingua franca on a regular basis and need to adapt to the real-life situations.

Similar pragmatic attitudes towards the use of ELF can be expected to come up in this study, which explores interviews conducted with university students doing their studies (at least partly) in English. This paper introduces initial findings of a more comprehensive study on language regulation in ELF. By analysing the students' accounts of their experiences and views of using English in their studies, this paper considers how the students construct notions of language use.

2 Interview accounts and language use

Today, social reality is quite widely seen "as something that is extensively reproduced *and at least partially* created anew in the socially and historically specific activities of everyday life" (Rampton 2006: 25, original italics; see also Bauman 1991, Berger & Luckmann 1971). What follows is that by exploring communicative interactions, we should be able to observe ways in which social practices are, on the one hand, reproduced, and on the other, reconstructed. In this light, speakers can be seen to have access to schematic, relatively stable aspects of practice before engagement in interaction (Hanks 1996: 233), for instance, based on their exposure to language standards. But even though these aspects may be discernible in the speakers' perceptions, they do not determine the speakers' linguistic and interactional behaviour. Communicative interactions are sites for negotiation of practices and assumptions, and it is possible for new practices to emerge over the course of action. We can thus talk about schematic aspects of practice that suggest what can be reproduced in interactions, and emergent aspects of practice that indicate what is created anew (see Hanks 1996).

Although we, as analysts, might draw on our own understanding of existing social practices in considering whether the practices are reproduced or reconstructed in a given interaction, informant interviews can provide us with further insight as to what the speakers themselves regard as an existing practice (see section 3 for interviews as a method). Interview accounts that shed light on informants' attitudes and perceptions can tell us about the schematic aspects of practice that the informants take with them to interactions. By exploring the informants' descriptions of their conduct, we are better equipped at understanding the informants' actions from their perspective. What is more, we can also investigate possible discrepancies between informants' constructions of ideological conceptions of language as opposed to their descriptions of experience-based actual practice.

However, the accounts do not tell us about the actual practice, and whether the conceptions are reproduced or created anew in spontaneous interaction. When the accounts are analysed together with spontaneous interactional data from the same people, it is further possible to compare the accounts with actual practice, and investigate the relations between schematic and emergent aspects of communicative interaction. This comparison is not done in this paper, but it is acknowledged that while surveys and interview studies provide valuable insights into how people view ELF, they cannot tell us about the ways the same people use English in lingua franca or other settings. We know that surveys and interviews are accounts of actions, and that actual actions may differ from the accounts. This is why it is useful to draw on different types of data, and to supplement findings in one type with the other(s).[1]

The guiding concept of this study is *language regulation*, defined as the negotiation of situationally acceptable, appropriate and correct linguistic conduct. Following the division into schematic and emergent aspects, language regulation is understood to include ideological conceptions of language that are built around what speakers construct as acceptable, appropriate and correct language use (schematic aspects); as well as language-regulatory practices that emerge in the course of interaction, such as taking the role of an intermediary (emergent aspects). Interview accounts analysed in this paper are important in bringing to light schematic aspects of language regulation.

3 Material and methods

Three sets of student interviews[2] are analysed in this paper. The first set comprises three individual interviews and one pair interview with students who attended the same university course, and met three times outside class to prepare a joint presentation for their course. Two of the students were interviewed again later[3] to inquire about possible changes in their perceptions. The second set of interviews includes two pair/group interviews with students attending the same course: two students were first interviewed together while the course was still going on, and these two were joined by a third student and interviewed again after the course had finished. The third set comprises five individual interviews conducted with students attending the same discussion group meetings. The students, who shared the interviewer(s)' first language (L1) Finnish, were interviewed in Finnish, the rest in English.

In total, 13 students were interviewed, representing a variety of different L1s as shown in Table 1. All of the students used at least one other language in addition to

their L1. Six of the students were exchange students, five of who reported that one of their main reasons for coming to Finland was to improve their English alongside their studies. The other students were either degree or visiting students who studied at least partly in English. Generally, the non-Finnish students used mainly English in their daily lives in Finland, both in their studies and spare-time (unless speaking to fellow L1 speakers). S5a and S4c said they tried to avoid other Spaniards in order to be forced to use English, and S2c, herself German, even reported using English with her German friend also living in Finland at the time. A few of the international students reported using some Finnish, and other languages were also occasionally used. The Finnish students used mainly Finnish (S1a, S4a and S3c) or Swedish (S1c) in their spare-time, but English, alongside Finnish and/or Swedish, in their studies. The background information of the students is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 Background of the students*

Speaker code	First language	Country of origin	Other languages
S1a	Finnish	Finland	English, German
S2a**	Portuguese	Brazil	Spanish, English, Finnish
NS3a	English	USA	French
S4a	Finnish	Finland	English
S5a**	Spanish	Spain	English, Latin
S3b**	Arabic	Sudan	English
S8b**	Arabic	Sudan	English
S4b	Dinka	Sudan	English, Finnish
S2c	German	Germany	English, Russian, Finnish
S1c	Swedish	Finland	Finnish, English
S3c	Finnish	Finland	English, (German)
NS5c	English	Canada	French
S4c	Spanish	Spain	English

* The information is based on the students' own accounts that they gave in a background information form and/or their interview. At least S1a, S4a and S3c have learned Swedish at school, but neither of them reported to be using the language.

** These students were interviewed twice.

The interviews were done as a part of ethnographically-influenced data collection, where the same students' speech was also recorded in their English-medium study events. As is typical of data-driven research, data collection methods were developed during the data collection, and this is also what was done with the interviews.

Most of the interviews were conducted with one student, but I also tried out interviewing two or three students at a time. This was done to see whether the interview situations would become more informal and discussion-like. The assumption was confirmed to a certain extent, but since pair/group interviews do not ensure the

interviewees equitable representation, the interviews of the third set were eventually conducted individually.

The interview guide was developed based on earlier experiences. The most noticeable change was made for the third set of interviews. In order to better ground the interview questions to the interviewees' daily life, the interviewees were asked to fill in two clock faces representing the hours of the day, and mark in the clock faces what they do during a typical day, with whom and which language(s) they use in the activities (see Satchwell 2005, Mäntylä et al. 2009). The responses were then used to inquire more about the interviewees' use of English. Further, questions directly related to the study event that the interviewees' attended were done more systematically than in the earlier interviews. Throughout the interviews, the main theme of studying in English in an international setting remained the same.

In all, the interviews were conducted to better understand what studying in an L2[4] in an international environment meant for the students themselves. The interview guide was designed to give the students opportunities to tell about their experiences and views on studying in English as well as on using English otherwise. The aim was to find out what the students think about conducting (part of) their studies in English, what it is like for them to study in an international environment, what kinds of experiences they have had with using English with different speakers (e.g. with L1 English speakers vs. L2 English speakers), and how they construct their experiences and conceptions.

The analysis, then, explores students' accounts on the use of English, particularly in international contexts. It concentrates on the following questions:

1. What notions of language use are manifested in the students' descriptions of English used in their study contexts?
2. What means do they use to describe L1 English and L1 English speakers in these contexts?

This focus on the students' descriptions of ELF as opposed to L1 English can tell us about their conceptions of what kind of English usage is desirable for them, and how they view the situation in the ELF contexts they are familiar with. In order to link the analysis to the question of language regulation, it is further considered in what ways the descriptions incorporate questions of correctness, acceptability and appropriateness. The analysis thus deals with the schematic aspects of communicative interaction, that is, the possibly shared notions that students take with them to interactions, and that are likely to affect their linguistic-interactional conduct.

To discern possible patterns in the data, the study uses discourse analytic methods. The interviews were first listened to carefully, and timed content schemes with partial transcriptions were done in order to structure the interview contents, and to be able to later return to certain topics. An interview grid was then developed based on the interview questions and the topics discussed in the interviews, and this was used in the analysis to broadly classify answers under certain topics. After this, the accounts were analysed for shared notions of language use, or discourses[5] constructed in the accounts.

In this study, interviews are seen as interactional events where both the interviewee and the interviewer affect the course and content of the interaction. Also, it should be kept in mind that the position of the interviewer(s) as language expert(s) remains implicitly present throughout the interviews.

4 Student conceptions: patterned portrayals of language use

The focus of this paper derives from what was discussed during the interviews; in this case, using English in ELF contexts and how L2 use of English might differ from L1 use. The students were inquired about their experiences of studying in English, and although this often made them distinguish between L1 and L2 use of English without prompting, this was not always the case. This implies that in ELF situations, such a division is not necessarily prominent. However, when asked about such differences, the distinction was recognised and reproduced by the students, as illustrated in Example 1.

Example 1
> <IR> and who do you think is easiest to understand speaking english is it native speakers or or other . </IR>
> <IE> which one is easier to understand </IE>
> <IR> yeah yeah . </IR>
> <IE> native (speech) is usually easier but when they speak so fast and fluently and fast and using all the re- all the resources of the language if you are not that used to the person it's er it's not that easy maybe some (foreigner people that) speak good english and speak slowly it's better to understand it's easier to understand </IE>

The example illustrates interviewer influence. We can see that the interviewer's question includes two assumptions: (a) that there are native and non-native speakers of English and (b) that the interviewee might consider native speakers of English easier to understand than others. What happens is that the interviewee reproduces the first assumption and at first, also aligns with the second assumption, but eventually ends up saying the opposite. Thus, it would not be wise to claim on the basis of this example alone that the students constructed differences between native and non-native speakers of English, since the assumption is included in the interviewer's question. But we might argue that since the second assumption is not accepted, the influence of the interviewer is diminished. In the following sections, we can further see that the native–non-native speaker distinction is relevant for the students and that this is reflected in the notions of language use the students construct. The following Section 4.1 focuses on the descriptions of ELF, and Section 4.2 looks into the comparisons.

4.1 We speak a modified version of English

Let us first explore the students' descriptions of the kind of English they use and are used to in ELF settings. As we can see in Examples 2–4, the students reported speaking *simple English* or using *clear sentences*.

Example 2
> ((…)) we er we speak er er *simple english* ((…))

Example 3

((…)) it's easy with (the) non-natives because we try to to to speak all the time in *easy sentences* <IR> mhm </IR> in *clear sentences*

Example 4

yeah *it's not the real english that we speak we speak some some er modified version of it that kind of fits everyone's language level* <IR> uh-huh </IR> and like if <COUGH> yeah this is like what we do and the real english is somewhere there except for some exception some people speak it very fluently but , *most of us don't*

These descriptions show that ELF is seen as a modified, a simplified version of English adjusted for the different *language level[s]* of the participants. The examples thus suggest that for one, ELF use is deemed to have typical characteristics of its own in that it is, for instance, *simple* and entails using *easy sentences*. Second, these characteristics are achieved by adapting one's language use. Third, the adaptation is done in order to achieve mutual understanding among people who have varying command of English. And finally, because of the modifications, ELF is differentiated from L1, or *real english*, which is also constructed as being out of reach for most users of ELF (section 4.2).

As we saw in the accounts above, the students showed awareness of the need to adapt one's language use in ELF settings. The following Examples 5–8 illustrate student reports describing how they modify their language use.

Example 5

maybe i would try to *speak a little more clearly* that er and perhaps er this (maybe) sound bad but perhaps i would er s- *slow my speech down* just a little bit <IR> mhm </IR> and that it all depends on the individual you are talking to of course and er if something doesn't come across clearly i might try to *rephrase* it er differently (yes)

Example 6

erm , for example i make *more of an effort to speak correctly* when i s- talk to a native english speaker <IR> really alright [@@] </IR> [@@] and erm , when i yeah yeah i think that's basically my my er effort to adapt <IR> mhm-hm </IR> my language like to to *adapt to the language skill* of the person i talk to

Example 7

and er i tend to some of the spanish students have trouble understanding me as well as one or two of the french students if i'm not speaking french with them so i i try to *simplify* things a little er especially in the group work situations ((…)) just *explaining my way around concepts* rather than you know er i wouldn't just throw out a word like antidisestablishmentarianism in class you know @@ er things like that

Example 8

ye- yes er er actually i avoid like *i avoid using like er long sentences* and er (this) (xx) (sometime) and er *unnecessary words* but but not too *not too simplified* er

the the the word but also to to to convey the exact meaning yeah and t- easy to to to to get

As can be seen in the examples, the modifications the students report doing (e.g. speaking *more clearly*) reflect their descriptions of what ELF is like (e.g. speaking *in clear sentences*). Both L1 (Examples 5 and 7) and L2 users (Examples 6 and 8) report on adapting their language, which suggests that ELF situations require adaptation from both user groups (see Jenkins 2000: 227, Carey this volume). The accounts suggest that adaptation is done to simplify language use, but also to polish it (Example 6). Polishing is reportedly done when speaking with L1 users, which again implies that using ELF is separated from using English with L1 users. This means that questions of adequacy, appropriateness and correctness of language (use) are bound to take different forms in ELF than in L1 English*es*.

Despite describing ELF as *simple*, the students did not think ELF use is without its problems. For one, they reported occasional trouble in understanding others, but also willingness to cope with the trouble (Examples 9 and 10), which suggests the importance of accommodating to others.

Example 9

i think that for me i think (it's) er (it's) just *clearly speaking (that is the) important* i think even with non- non-native speaker you might have some problems when like if there are *some word are incorrect* or something like that or that sense yeah *(influence by) native er language* yeah yeah even i think these elements might have their influence yeah in communication especially i think in the first time and *you cope with it* (yeah)

Example 10

<IR> was (xx) was it always easy for you to understand the other participants </IR>

<IE> *no in most cases it was* (though) but ((…)) erm yeah i found it *very difficult to understand* <NAME S4c> the spanish [guy] <IR> [alright] yeah </IR> and erm i also found it *difficult to understand* <NAME S3c> <IR> mhm-hm </IR> erm yeah and the other two girls they *spoke very clearly* to me and the tutors too </IE>

((…))

<IR> [yeah] and er ehm did you try what did you do to try to understand them (er) /IR>

<IE> erm i *i had to concentrate a lot and i listened very carefully* <IR> mhm </IR> and that was it <IR> yeah </IR> basically yeah <IR> yeah </IR> so it would have been more difficult to understand them if it had been a er er loud surroundings for example </IE>

References to inabilities of expressing oneself formed another characteristic of the student accounts, examples given in Examples 11 and 12.

Example 11

it's not po- it's *not possible to to express* all the things you want to say in (an)other language that's *not yours*

Example 12

((…)) I'm always *afraid of saying something wrong* even though for instance in our group no one speaks *perfectly* except perhaps @NS3a but@ but it just makes you feel *embarrassed* if you notice that you pronounced something *wrong* or used a completely *wrong* word

(my translation)

As the examples suggest, the students described uncertainties of using English by drawing on (a) the naturalness and ease of speaking one's L1 as opposed to the limitations of speaking in an L2 (Example 11) and (b) native speaker correctness (Example 12).

While the descriptions of ELF suggest heightened awareness of language use and the use of English as a tool, the uncertainties expressed by the participants seem to build on the conception of an idealised native speaker. In all, it thus seems that the students are constructing a discourse of clarity and simplification on the one hand, and a discourse of uncertainty on the other, the former based on their experiences of ELF interaction and the latter partly based on their experiences of difficulties in expressing oneself and in understanding others in ELF situations and partly on their previously learned conceptions of language against which they judge their own language use.

4.2 We forget to use it properly

The students' descriptions of ELF implied that L1 English is seen as different from ELF. The following examples show how this distinction is constructed.

Example 13

i think so because i have used it a lot especially at the university but at the same time i feel that because here it's not an english er country *everybody speaks a more or less correct english* and because everyone understand each other *you don't pay attention* that you are sometimes making some *mistakes* especially pronunciation or some grammar mistakes but everyone is understanding you but when i had the chance to talk to somebody from america or from some other english speaking country *then i realise that i have bad english* if i have to pronounce (xx) everything correctly and try to make me er to to m- to make the other understand you well

Example 14

((…)) because I think it is so different it must be so weird for for native speakers to come here and hear everyone using English somehow just to like *survive in the social b- surrounding* and , yeah because this way we exchange students often forget to to use it *properly* i think

Example 15

i have said that i have friend from from britain here and huh it's i- impossible to understand him yeah it's easy with (the) non-natives because we try to to to speak all the time in easy sentences <IR> mhm </IR> in clear sentences but it's not the same for him he speak all the time er *naturally* <IR> mhm-hm </IR>

yeah and there are a lot of words a lot of sentences a lot of er specific words that for us we don't know yeah <IR> mhm </IR> er it's e- for me it's enough with the normal vocabulary that can you imagine the the different words that don't appear in the dictionaries (xx) ((…))

The examples suggest that L1 English is used as a yardstick in evaluating ELF. L1 English is considered *natural* and *proper*, whereas ELF users are seen to make *mistakes* and to have a limited command of the language. In this sense, ELF is constructed as deficient. But then again, it seems that L1 correctness is not considered to be an issue when using English in ELF settings: the examples suggest that mistakes are not paid attention to, but rather what is constructed as important is comprehensibility. This means that correctness is seen in relation to L1 English, but that such correctness is not necessary nor attended to in ELF settings. Because *mistakes* are not seen to hinder communication in ELF settings, deviation from L1 English is considered acceptable.

The following example even suggests that the students consider that there already exists something of an 'international English' that is defined by its function as a lingua franca, not its being a native language (Example 16). Here it should be noted that the interviewer specifically asks about the existence of 'international English' thus providing the interviewee with the term, but as the answer suggests, this makes perfect sense to the interviewee.

Example 16

<IR> yeah or just er 'cause you've been saying that er er that we should speak proper english </IR>
<IE> yeah </IE>
<IR> er so do you connect this proper english to to the kinds of englishes that are used that are used in in native contexts or co- or would it be possible to kind of have have a kind of international english in your opinion (xx) </IR>
<IE> *i think we already have an international english* and erm it is probably , er . (inevitable) not it's not po- well *it is the only way it can er it can be used* because i mean we all we won't be able to speak like an english english native speaker if we don't live in the country or study it but er yeah </IE>

The separation of L1 and L2 speakers also becomes evident in the tendency of the L2 speaker students to use L1 speakers as proof readers and ask them to correct their English, simply because they are L1 speakers. This is illustrated in Examples 17 and 18.

Example 17

well i'm the english speaking person in the group @so@ you know it's er it's kind of just *assumed* by everyone in my group that I'll edit it all at the end so and in some ways it can be kind of tuff certainly adds to my workload

Example 18

but er the the the english speakers they can *correct me* (and this) is better

L2 student accounts reporting the wish that L1 speakers correct their language and the idea that L1 speakers are more useful for learning the language imply that the students are motivated to improve their English alongside their studies, and that the students considered it better to turn to L1 English and L1 English speakers as models, rather than to each other.

However, the question of correctness and correcting is not that simple. First, there is the question of when correcting is appropriate and when it is a face-threatening act (Goffman 1967, Brown and Levinson 1987). Example 19 suggests that it may not always be appropriate to correct someone's language use.

Example 19

i i won't say anything as as as far as or i don't think this is correct i wouldn't wanna try to correct someone's language use i don't think so .

Second, the L2 students constructed uncertainty of using English by drawing on an idealised version of the "perfect" native speaker, which seemed to hinder them from using English, even in an ELF setting (see Example 12 in section 4.1). What is more, although the L2 students seemed to prefer L1 English speakers as (unofficial) language teachers and suggested that interacting with L1 speakers is better for their learning of English, they tended to report more difficulties in understanding L1 speakers than other L2 speakers[6]. This is illustrated in Examples 20 and 21 – the latter is by an L1 speaker of English.

Example 20

native (speech) is usually easier but when they speak so *fast and fluently* and fast and *using all the re- all the resources of the language* if you are not that used to the person it's er it's not that easy maybe some (foreigner people that) *speak good english and speak slowly* it's better to understand it's easier to understand

Example 21

one that actually really shocked me was that i had one of the er french girls <NAME> come and say just always speak french with me because i can't i have to *try so hard to understand you when you are speaking english because of your accent* and i don't think of myself as having of course you don't ever think of yourself as having an accent so it was slightly bizarre for me so

In the examples, L1 English speakers are seen to have difficult accents in addition to speaking *fast and fluently* and *using all […] the resources of the language*, which makes it more difficult to follow their speech. This implies that L1 use of English in an ELF setting may not be productive or even desirable.

In all, drawing on the distinction between L1 and L2 use, the students regard L1 English as a model from which ELF use is seen to deviate. This suggests that they construct a discourse of L1 correctness. However, the accounts also suggest that while L1 English may be oriented to when aiming to learn English, it may not be communicatively effective in ELF settings, which seems to contradict the discourse.

5 Discussion

The students interviewed for this study used ELF on a regular basis, and were thus able to draw on their experiences when describing what ELF is like and what it means for them to study in English. The findings suggest that the students take a similarly pragmatic view on ELF as do the informants in Ehrenreich (2010) and Smit (2010): for them ELF is a tool that needs to be modified accordingly – as suggested by the clarity and simplification discourse discerned in the data. However, the students were also found to draw on previously acquired notions of language, such as naturalness of L1, which seemed to create uncertainty in using English. This discourse of uncertainty suggests that ELF use is not without its problems, even though ELF was described as simple and easy.

Contrary to ELF, L1 English was depicted as natural and fluent, and it was generally considered more difficult to understand, which implies the importance of adapting L1 English to ELF settings. That L1 English was considered natural is reflected in the student accounts reporting that it is easier and more natural to use an L1 than an L2. For this reason, L1 speakers were also seen to possess the *real english* the students would like to speak. When the students referred to their wish to improve their own English, they reported L1 speakers and L1 English as their best choice for teachers and a target of learning, because speaking to an L1 speaker challenged them to be more careful with the language than with an L2 speaker. The students, then, strived for learning English alongside their studies, and looked for L1 speakers for a linguistic model. In going for the native speaker target, the students can be seen to have constructed a discourse of L1 correctness. Interestingly, however, the student accounts suggest that this kind of correctness is not an issue in ELF situations.[7] Rather, the students reported that *mistakes* were not paid attention to. This suggests that while the students constructed notions of L1 correctness, they also constructed ELF as its own version of English that does not conform to L1 correctness, but rather relies on accommodation.

In all, the students seemed to uphold a division between L1 English and ELF. Correctness and naturalness were attached to L1 English, and it was considered best for learning English, but the students' descriptions of ELF and what matters in ELF communication were in contrast with the attributes attached to L1 English. This seems to suggest a discrepancy between the students' notions of L1 correctness and their experiences of what matters in ELF communication.

Notes

[1] For an analysis drawing on interactional and interview data based on partly the same data as used in this paper, see Hynninen (in press).

[2] Two MA students working as assistants in the *Studying in English as Lingua Franca* (SELF) project (http://www.helsinki.fi/elfa/self) helped me with the interviews. The first two sets of interviews I conducted together with Pirjo Surakka-Cooper so that we were both present and at least partly active in the interview situations. The third set of interviews I did on my own, with Anni Holopainen attending some of the sessions.

3   One student was interviewed again a couple of months and another one a year later.

4   L2 is used to refer to all those languages the speakers reported as 'other languages' they use alongside their L1.

5   The term *a discourse* is often used to bridge the micro level of language use to the macro level of society, and is thus defined as a recognisable, relative fixed way of describing a phenomenon (e.g. Pietikäinen & Mäntynen 2009). In this study, the term is used to refer to notions of language use shared by the students, whether or not these notions can be more widely recognised as relatively fixed ways of meaning making.

6   As we saw in Examples 9 and 10 (section 4.1), the students did report on difficulties in understanding other L2 speakers as well; but in general, L1 speakers were considered more difficult to understand.

7   See Pilkinton-Pihko (this volume) for ELF lecturers' views on conforming to L1 English speaker standards.

Transcription conventions

The transcriptions follow the SELF project transcription guide (http://www.helsinki.fi/elfa/SELF_transcription_guide.pdf). Special symbols used in this paper are explained below. The speaker codes <IR> and <IE> stand for interviewer and interviewee respectively.

<IR> </IR> and <IE> </IE>	Utterance begins/ends
,	Brief pause 2–3 sec.
.	Pause 3–4 sec.
te-	Unfinished utterances
[text 1] [text 2]	Overlapping speech (approximate, shown to the nearest word, words not split by overlap tags)
(text)	Uncertain transcription
(xx)	Unintelligible speech
@@	Laughter
@text@	Spoken laughter
<NAME S#>	Names of participants in the same speech event
<NAME>	Other names mentioned
<TEXT>	Descriptions and comments between tags
((…))	Omitted text from transcription

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