English as a lingua franca lecturers' self-perceptions of their language use

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Abstract
This paper examines ELF (English as a lingua franca) lecturers' self-perceptions of their language use and ability to communicate in English as well as what language ideologies guide their self-perceptions. To investigate this, a phenomenographic approach (see Cohen et al. 2007) was used. The input data for the phenomenographic investigation were collected from three ELF lecturers of engineering, who participated in a self-assessment of their language abilities and two semi-structured interviews that focused on themes and questions related to their perceptions of their own language use and to their language ideologies. Three types of language ideologies were identified: standard language ideology, standard English native speaker (NS) language ideology, and English as 'other'. The findings show that none of the lecturers adhere strictly to standard language ideology or to standard English NS language ideology and that lecturers' self-perceptions change depending on what they choose as their standard measure.

1 Introduction

Due to internationalization in higher education, English has become the dominant language for programs in academia in general (Graddol 1997, 2006). The scale to which English has spread to degree programs in non-native speaking (NNS) countries is unprecedented (Mauranen 2007). Therefore, research on internationalization in countries where English is used as a lingua franca (ELF) in higher education should include a focus on the impact of English. This paper is an example of such research, focusing on the initial findings of an investigation into lecturers' perceptions of teaching in English at a Finnish university. These NNS lecturers are teaching their subject content in English to primarily NNS students of engineering. In other words, they are lecturing their subject content in an ELF context. This study investigates ELF university lecturers' self-perceptions of their language use and ability to communicate in English in the classroom. The study seeks to answer the following question: What are the lecturers' perceptions of their own language use and ability to communicate in English for the purposes of work, and to what extent are their language ideologies manifested in the ways they talk about their perceptions? This paper introduces some of the issues via three ELF university lecturers of engineering at Aalto University, who participated in a pilot-mentoring program on teaching through English to a multicultural environment in 2009–2010. Obviously, Finland is not the only country where lecturers face the challenge of teaching through English in multicultural environments. Therefore, this paper is relevant to ELF lecturers in other countries as well.

2 The setting: ELF in higher education

In higher education in Europe and elsewhere, internationalization puts pressure on universities to offer instruction in English. Internationalization as a process has resulted in English becoming the most widely used lingua franca globally. This shift to English has also led to a trend where a good proportion of the world's technical and scientific knowledge is available in English only. In European higher education, the pressure to compete for students participating in exchange programs and other types of transnational cooperation has led to increased English-medium instruction (Wächter & Maiworm 2008). In this respect universities in Europe and other countries where English is a lingua franca have a commonality: More opportunity to participate in exchange programs where the majority of university lecturers and students have no special relationship with the English language as they have not lived extensively in an English-speaking country. For this reason, the proficiency levels may vary greatly among both students and faculty. ELF lecturers and students work via English in instructional situations where they are 'users' of English, not 'learners' of it.

This is the current background against which those in higher education in Europe and in many other outer circle countries[1] are trying to offer high-quality education. In Finland, the new Aalto University, (established via a merger) has plans to offers at least one masters' program in English in every department. Thus, the job requirements of the teaching faculty at the master's level entails being able to provide high-quality education whereby the language of instruction is English. Because quality assessment and quality control are regarded as important at Aalto University (see Nordström et al 2009), a pilot-mentoring program, directed by Päivi Korpelainen, was established as a means to provide support to faculty who have volunteered to teach in English in a multicultural context.

As one of the mentors in this program, I began to realize that the perceptions that lecturers have of their own language use and their ability to communicate in English may play a fundamental role in how they view their own performance in English-medium instruction.

3 Approach: The role of language ideologies

My starting point is the notion of language ideology, a term that has been well-critiqued (see L. Milroy 1999, J. Milroy 2001, Milroy & Milroy 1999, Woolard 1992, Woolard & Schieffelin 1994). In terms of English, language ideology is eminent in discussions on 'standard English', which has its roots in prescriptivism and which entails judgments about 'correct' and 'incorrect' language use. According to Milroy and Milroy (1999:1), such rules are just as arbitrary as dinner table rules.

As J. Milroy (2001) points out, standard language ideologies historically have deep roots and are thoroughly naturalized. These historical processes have led to a standard language ideology that is enforced through codified handbooks on language, dictionaries, and other similar reference works as well as through public channels such as the education system. Such codified language with its intertwined standard language ideologies are intended for native speakers (NS) of the language and anyone targeting nativelike language.

In English language teaching (ELT) materials, not only is prescriptivism in codified grammar books prevalent but also standard English NS language ideology (Jenkins 2007). Thus, through the use of ELT materials in the classroom and elsewhere, most ELF users have been exposed to such ideologies when learning English. The target of ELT is to promote prescriptive NS norms. Consequently, learners of English may think their grammar must be perfect, that is, like textbook grammar that models the so-called idealized educated NS. Moreover, most learners never reach the near-native target (Cook 1999: 204), which is not necessarily relevant for them.

ELF research views language as having variation, some of which is generally thought to have arisen from contact situations. As Ammon (2003) observes, NNSs pay more attention to language than NSs do, which allows them to shape language into a form that may be more appropriate in lingua franca communication than the form used by a NS. In other words, the local context may call for adaptation. For the purposes of this paper, I will use the term 'English as other' (following Jenkins 2007) to refer to data that reflect this concept. In other words, a speaker may choose to communicate in a way that is non-binding to an ideological positioning indicative of a specific NS speech community.

In the present study, the role of language ideologies is central to the investigation on how ELF lecturers view their own language use and ability to communicate in English. These lecturers are engineers, who are not in the language profession, and they have probably retained quite a bit of the language ideologies prevalent in their language training at school and possibly early university studies. Thus, they all have one factor in common: exposure to teaching methodologies and teaching materials infused with prescriptivism and native speakerism. This training is likely to conflict with their practical experience from their careers.

Given this background, this article investigates language ideologies that guide lecturers' self-perceptions of their language use and ability to communicate in English. It aims to discern what language ideologies are present in lecturers' perceptions of their own use of English, and whether their language ideologies have a bearing on their self-perceptions of their language use and ability to communicate in English as well as their perceptions of their own performances.

4 Research design and other methods

The backgrounds of ELF lecturers will vary widely in terms of their experiences in learning and using English. Nevertheless, the majority of them will have learned English through formal education where teaching methodologies and materials were infused with prescriptive NS norms.

Against this background, it is interesting to see how lecturers view their language use and ability to communicate in English for the purposes of work. It was hypothesized that their language ideologies would influence their positive or negative self-perceptions of their language use. A related hypothesis is that their perceptions of their own success will be measured against standard English NS language ideology.

One of the fundamental assumptions in this paper is that lecturers' language ideologies may have a bearing on their perceptions of their own language use as well as their perceptions of their own performances. Having decided on a qualitative study that examines lecturers' self-perceptions of their own language use, the next question

was how to operationalize the work. For the data collection to be meaningful, the lecturers would need to describe their perceptions of their language use and ability to communicate in English and their experiences.

It was decided that an appropriate approach would be phenomenography. In phenomenographic research, the aim is to gain knowledge of the experiences of the research subjects by interpreting their descriptions of various phenomena collected via interviews.[2] For the present study, the input data for the phenomenographic investigation was lecturers' statements of experiences of their own language learning and perceptions of their own language use and ability to communicate in English while lecturing subject-specific content. The predominant method for collecting the data was through semi-structured interviews, conducted by me. The first semi-structured interview was based on a self-assessment questionnaire covering language background, ability, and experiences. The questionnaire was emailed prior to the interview. It consisted of background information and a 4-point Likert scale. Lecturers completed the questionnaire and returned it. Then, the first semi-structured interview was conducted, lasting one and one-half hours in length, where open-ended questions were posed that addressed lecturers' language learning experiences and perceptions of their own language use and ability to communicate in English in their professions as well as the language ideologies that guide their perceptions. Lecturers were asked to reflect on both their language learning experiences at school and their teaching experiences, covering points related to what they see as their own strengths (i.e. what communicative aspects appear to be working well) and weaknesses (i.e. concerns and uncertainties). In the second one-and-one-half-hour interview, they were asked questions related to their experiences in and views to using English for academic and professional purposes at work and in ELF contexts. Both semi-structured interviews were based on a few prepared themes and questions, which were not distributed in advance. In this interview technique, it is important for the interviewer to be sensitive to the interviewee and to come up with follow-up questions in response to answers. Therefore, it was not possible to make a detailed plan about how the interviews would evolve. Interviews were either recorded or field notes taken verbatim. Recorded interviews were transcribed.

The interview data were first analyzed for participants' perceptions and after that linked to language ideologies. The analysis explores how participants view their own language use and ability to communicate in English. It aims to discern the language ideologies that guide the self-perceptions in order to reveal tendencies that are suggestive of links between language ideologies and lecturers' positive or negative self-perceptions. It is important to point out that links can only be made in cases where the lecturers themselves make the link. For example, where English NS language ideology is concerned, they may refer to feelings of inadequacy with NSs or compare their own performance to that of an NS target. On the other hand, where 'English as other' is concerned, they may refer to feelings about language use or communicative strategies employed in NNS-NNS interaction.

5 Presenting the cases

This section briefly presents the three lecturers around which this paper is based. All three lecturers are engineers, and they have all volunteered to teach their subject

content in English. In addition, they were all participating in a pilot-mentoring program on teaching through English in a multicultural environment. An overview of these three cases is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Overview of the three cases

	Lecturer A	*Lecturer B*	*Lecturer C*
Lecturer's language background	L1 Arabic	L1 Finnish	L1 Finnish
	L2 French	L2 English	L2 German
	L3 English		L3 English
	L4 Finnish		
Years English studied at school	3	10	2 ½
Years working in English	13	12	10
Years lecturing in English	13	12	1 ½

The three lecturers have quite different backgrounds even though two of them are Finnish. Here, two points are relevant to the current study. First, Lecturer B studied English at school considerably longer than the other two lecturers. Hence, she has had lengthy exposure to ELT teaching and materials at school in comparison to Lecturers A and C. Second, it appears that Lecturer C has less experience in using English for professional purposes since he has been lecturing for only one and one-half years. However, his total experience in using English for professional purposes is 11 ½ years. Thus, the total length of his professional experience as an ELF user is similar to the other two lecturers. Since all three have volunteered to lecture in English and to participate in a pilot-mentoring program, it suggests that they are all fairly confident with their skills in English and are open to having new experiences.

5.1 Lecturer A: Self-assessment

In a self-assessment of his general English for everyday use on a 4-point Likert scale, Lecturer A evaluated his skills on speaking and vocabulary as less than adequate. However, he assessed his skills for English for academic and professional purposes to be at least adequate in all categories. From the two scales, the biggest difference is seen in his self-assessment related to vocabulary, where he rated himself as having much stronger vocabulary (i.e. subject-specific terminology) for academic and professional purposes than for non-professional purposes, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Lecturer A: Self-assessed English

	Less than adequate	Adequate	Good	Excellent
English for non-professional purposes				
Listening		x		
Speaking	x			
Writing		x		
Vocabulary	x			
English for academic and professional purposes				
Listening			x	
Speaking		x		
Writing		x		
Subject—specific terminology			x	

In a follow-up interview, Lecturer A pointed out that he uses his English for professional purposes much more than his English for everyday use. Therefore, his professional skills in English have developed and he feels that they are adequate for lecturing engineering topics. He expressed concern over his pronunciation, which he says is influenced by French. On subject-specific terminology, he feels that terminology is easy to learn, but that being able to pronounce words correctly is another matter. He pointed out that not so much terminology is needed for engineering since it deals predominantly with formulae, which have set phrases. When discussing fluency, he reported that he sometimes needs to search for a word, especially if he has not used it recently. However, he feels that this has not been a problem since he can usually accommodate by finding an alternative way to express his ideas.

5.2 Lecturer B: Self-assessment

In a self-assessment on a 4-point Likert scale, Lecturer B generally assessed her skills to be strong. Like Lecturer A, she assessed her skills in vocabulary for English for non-professional purposes to be lower than for academic and professional purposes, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Lecturer B: Self-assessed English

	Less than adequate	Adequate	Good	Excellent
English for non-professional purposes				
Listening				x
Speaking			x	
Writing			x	
Vocabulary			x	
English for academic and professional purposes				
Listening				x
Speaking			x	
Writing			x	
Subject—specific terminology				x

In a follow-up interview, Lecturer B indicated that she would like to find ways to both increase and maintain fluency. Lecturer B feels that she has excellent knowledge of subject-specific terminology, partly because the systems with which she works are in English only and so is the training (provided by NSs). Lecturer B also acknowledged that she perceives her English to be very good in comparison to ordinary Finns, yet she lost confidence while giving a presentation in English when she noticed a NS in the audience, who had previously been her English teacher.

5.3 Lecturer C: self-assessment

Like Lecturers A and B, Lecturer C self-assessed his skills in vocabulary for English for non-professional purposes to be lower than for academic and professional purposes. Similar to Lecturer A, Lecturer C assessed his skills for English for academic and professional purposes to be at least adequate in all categories. Like Lecturer A, Lecturer C feels more adequate in spoken language skills for academic and professional purposes than for everyday situations, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Lecturer C: Self-assessed English

	Less than adequate	Adequate	Good	Excellent
English for non-professional purposes				
Listening			x	
Speaking		x		
Writing			x	
Vocabulary			x	
English for academic and professional purposes				
Listening			x	
Speaking			x	
Writing			x	
Subject—specific terminology				x

In a follow-up interview, Lecturer C reported that he reads a variety of English literature. He also often writes research in English and has published one book in English in his field. He learned to speak English while living and working in the USA for two years and since then has continued to use his English at work in a multicultural work environment in Finland. He expressed his main concern as fluency.

6 Results and discussion

The previous section outlined the language profiles of the individual lecturers. In this section the combined results from these three cases are presented with illustrative examples. Since the main area of interest is language ideologies, it was decided to present the results evolving around major themes from that point of view. First, the language ideologies are presented, and then the results of lecturers' self-perceptions of their own language use and ability to communication in English.

From the analysis, three language ideologies were identified: standard language ideology, standard English NS language ideology, and English as 'other'. The findings discuss the ways in which these ideological issues affect ELF lecturers.

6.1 Standard English language ideology

This section presents lecturers' self-perceptions related to standard English language ideology. From the combined findings, the following two themes were observed.

6.1.1 Correct language seen as important

One aspect of the combined findings is that the lecturers feel that it is important to try to speak correctly as they believe it enhances communication.

Interviewer:	I was wondering, do you think that it's important to speak correctly or that it's important to speak in the same manner as a native speaker?
Lecturer A:	I think it's important to speak correctly. I think it's the best because probably I won't be able to speak in the same way as a native speaker. So the best I can do is to speak correctly.

As lecturers were probed further about correctness, it became clear that all three mainly consider grammatical correctness as that which is represented in grammar books as opposed to the language spoken by NSs. This finding suggests that the prescriptive methods and materials to which the lecturers have been exposed during their language learning days at school have carried over into what they perceive as correct language use. In their view, correct language is that which has been modeled in ELT materials and classrooms. Such language is prescriptive in nature, and is based on the rules of written language use, not spoken.

6.1.2 Credibility seen as important

When discussing correctness in the interviews, the issue of credibility was raised.

Interviewer:	Ok, so I've got one more question related to this. Are your views related to credibility?
Lecturer A:	You know I recently read something on that. (Goes to get the article that was distributed in the previous mentoring workshop, which had been held in between interviews 1 and 2.) It says here that non-fluent language and inaccuracy can be a problem for credibility. So, yes, I'm concerned about my credibility. I would like to be a credible teacher. It is important to eliminate my systematic errors.

While all three lecturers felt that speaker credibility was important, only Lecturer A expressed concerns about his own language use as possibly affecting his credibility. Moreover, this concern was expressed after NS-biased material on language use and speaker credibility had been distributed in the pilot-mentoring program (see Lavelle 2008). The article states that language proficiency is a factor in speaker credibility. It points out two types of potential threats: 1) non-fluent language, that is, excessive delays, unwarranted repetition, and so on, and 2) inaccuracy pertaining to two types of errors, that is, high profile contrastive errors of the type found within a language community and recurrent errors that persist through a lecture seminar. The article then suggests ways to overcome the inaccuracies, which are based on standard English NS language ideology.

Unlike Lecturer A, the other two lecturers did not express concern about their speaker credibility. Lecturer B mentioned having read the same article, but feels that

she speaks correctly. Thus, it seems that she is not concerned about her credibility. Lecturer C made no specific reference to the Lavelle article. Instead, he related speaker credibility to having in-depth knowledge of the subject contents and an ability to answer students' questions. So, Lecturer C seems to have a different idea about what constitutes credibility.

6.2 English as 'other' vs Standard English NS language ideology

The previous section presented the combined findings for standard English language ideology. This section now presents the combined findings for the other two language ideologies: English as 'other' and standard English NS language ideology.

6.2.1 Communicating ideas clearly - seen as important

One striking aspect of the combined findings is that when asked directly about speaking correctly, lecturers say they feel that speaking with perfect grammar is not important. While lecturers see correct language as an important aspect of communication, it is not the most important point.

Interviewer:	What do you think about correct language, is it important to speak correctly?
Lecturer A:	No, I think that the most important point is to be able to communicate your ideas and to know that you have been understood. Perfect grammar is not important, but pronunciation can be a problem. You know, there are many kinds of English in the world today, and many of these local accents as well—like they have in Asia. This is why I want to improve my pronunciation to be more nativelike. If you can tell me my systematic errors, I know that I can improve them, but I don't need to speak like a native speaker. You know these Americans at conferences—you can't understand anything they say when they speak so fast. You ask them to slow down and they do for a moment and then they are right back at high speed again. They don't seem to understand why non-native speakers don't understand them. They have only one way of speaking.

Lecturer A emphasizes the importance of communication over language skills. On this point, he holds conflicting views about the NS: he wishes to be more nativelike, yet he disparages NSs. He seems to think that being more nativelike will help to reduce variety in accents, which in turn will ease ELF communication. Then, he continues by explaining that he does not need to speak like a NS otherwise, and even implies that it would be better not to. He points out the inability of monolingual NSs to accommodate NNSs in his example of NSs at international conferences who are incapable of maintaining a slower speed as a way to help the NNS listeners, even after being

reminded to do so. Accommodation is central to ELF interaction, where language variation is common. Jenkins argues that:

[s]peakers need to develop the ability to adjust their pronunciation according to the communicative situation in which they find themselves. (2000: 166)

In academic exchanges, Mauranen (2006) shows how ELF interlocutors deal with non-understanding appropriately. Although ELF speakers use accommodation as a way to enhance success in their communication, the ability of NSs to accommodate in NS-NNS interaction appears to depend on the NS as shown in Carey (2010).

6.2.2 NS targets not relevant, not useful

The combined findings indicate that NS targets are not relevant or useful. All three lecturers feel that NS targets are irrelevant for their work and not useful for communicative purposes in ELF interaction.

Interviewer:	For the purposes of your work, would you say that it's important to speak like a native speaker?
Lecturer C:	Nativelike accent is not necessary for lecturing in Finland. Working in a multicultural environment, one learns there are many different kinds of accents and still people are able to communicate. The accent isn't so important. I also try to avoid idiomatic expressions with NNSs. They aren't useful. It isn't the purpose of a lecturer to show that he is good in English. The purpose is to deliver a good lecture. The question is more about how the students experience the situation. It's about the feeling. A bad lecture is where you feel that the students are not with you. With foreign people, I'm all the time concerned with the contact. If I lose the contact…

What Lecturer C finds to be relevant is having the ability to maintain contact with his audience. What he sees as important is the communication and ability to accommodate when interacting. Within a multicultural environment, he feels that accent is not important. He points out that everyone has an accent of some kind and still they are able to communicate. His view on accents contrasts with Lecturer A.

According to previous research on ELT professionals, one way that NNS teachers in the ELT profession can enhance their self-perception is by realizing that their language proficiency is only one part of what makes a good lecturer. Having a good basis in language does not entail having an ability to teach well, and the NNS who has a mastery of teaching principles will be more effective than the NS who does not (Mizuno 2004:181). An earlier study supports this view as students cited some variables as "being qualified," "being prepared," and "being professional" when describing factors that influence their preference of teachers. These factors were more important than whether the instructor was a NS (Braine 2005: 19). These studies make an important point that should be recognized whether lecturers are teaching English, engineering or some other subject content.

Lecturers were also asked about their pronunciation targets. Although the lecturers' targets vary according to context and personal use, they all acknowledged that being able to speak like a NS in not important for the purposes of their work.

Interviewer:	Is your target to pronounce English like a native speaker?
Lecturer C:	No, it's not my target to pronounce English like a native speaker. It's not relevant for my work to speak like a native speaker. I don't need to speak like a NS to be intelligible in lectures. About 15 years ago, I would have chosen Oxford English, but not anymore. Nowadays something more nativelike, but not exactly native would be nice.

Although Lecturer C previously stated that accents are not important, he now reveals his own position. Like Lecturer A, he, too, would like to have an accent that is more nativelike but not exactly native. His response seems to reflect his sensitivity to changing times and changing contexts, where his focus has shifted to having an ability to communicate in ELF interaction.

To sum up, although all three lecturers admit that NS targets are irrelevant for their work, they appear to have NS targets, to some extent, as the measurement for their own success. Language users who measure their spoken performance in this manner are likely to view their language skills as 'deficient'. Thus, the next section examines this point.

6.3 Self-perceptions of own language use

Although the lecturers have expressed awareness of English as 'other' in their responses, they still seem to have standard English NS language ideology with its roots in prescriptivism as their primary target in terms of how they view their own language use. In this section, lecturers' self-perceptions of their language use and ability to communicate in English will be examined as well as the influence of their language ideologies on their perceptions. Because the interview questions were phrased the same for all the lecturers, the responses from all three lecturers are grouped with each interview question.

When asked about how they feel about their own language use for professional purposes, the lecturers responded as follows:

Interviewer:	For professional purposes, how do you feel about your own English?
Lecturer A:	I think my knowledge of English is adequate for teaching, especially in my field where much of the course content is dealing with formula. The language for talking about formula contains set phrases that are rather standard and easy to learn, but how to pronounce the words is another matter.
Lecturer B:	I I I (*stutters*) can manage with it quite well, but speaking is difficult for me, even in Finnish. So, that's why it's not easy to speak in English.

Lecturer C: I have some weaknesses in my English, so I speak more slowly and more clearly. I have made the decision that I put my effort on the content, not on the grammar. Of course I would be able to improve my language if I concentrate to some extent but I don't think that that's the right approach.

All the responses signal some negativity. Lecturer A views pronunciation as a problem. Lecturer B stutters at the onset of her response. As this was the only incident where she stuttered, it suggests that she lacks some confidence in her language skills. Lecturer C hints at grammar weaknesses, but then takes a more positive view and says they are not important.

Interviewer: How would you describe your own accent?

Lecturer A: My own is poor but clear enough. I wouldn't like to spend a lot of time trying to learn how to speak like a NS. I think it's more important to concentrate on what you're trying to say than on how to make some sound and whether you are making it right.

Lecturer B: Maybe dull Finnish English. My intonation is dull. It's very hard for the listeners to stay awake in the early mornings listening to my dull English.

Lecturer C: I have a clear Finnish accent. It's good enough. A Finnish accent is okay in Finland. In Boston, a Finnish accent is not okay. In England, even more pressure to speak like native speaker. In Boston, I learned that there are very many kinds of accents as I worked in a very international group. But, with native speakers, the threshold is higher; even to be able to ask a question in meetings to native speaker was much more difficult than to non-native speakers.

Neither Lecturer A nor B seem to think highly of their accents in comparison to NSs. In addition, Lecturer C feels pressure to speak like a NS in NS contexts, such as the USA or England. However, Lecturer C also feels that having a Finnish accent is okay in Finland. Thus, Lecturer C seems to have different standards for ELF contexts than for NS contexts. In Finland he takes a more positive view, that is, 'it's good enough'.

After describing their own accents, lecturers were directly asked whether they liked their own accents. Only Lecturer B pointed out that her answer to that question depends on her point of reference for the comparison.

Interviewer: Do you like your own English accent?

Lecturer A: No.

Lecturer B: Yes. It depends on whom you compare yourself with. If I compare myself with ordinary Finnish people, I am pleased with myself.

Lecturer C: No, it lacks natural flow. It would be nice to have that.

Neither Lecturer A nor C like their own accents. Although Lecturer B previously made a rather negative comment about her own intonation, she now says that she is pleased with her own accent in comparison to other Finns. Thus, the point of

comparison (against NSs or other NNSs) makes a difference in the positive or negative perception.

Negative perceptions of NNS accents have also been linked to linguistic discrimination, where NNS teachers of the ELT profession were perceived by employers to be: less qualified, less credible, less effective, and less competent than NSs (Lippi-Green 1997; Canagarajah 1999). This view lends itself to a negative self-perception, as the speakers feel inadequate and unsafe while lecturing in the non-native language. Studies have also found a high level of anxiety among NNS instructors of the English language (Madrid & Canado 2004:126). These studies reflect some of the problems associated with adopting prescriptive NS norms as the yardstick, and falling short of that mark.

7 Summary and conclusions

This paper has examined ELF lecturers' self-perceptions of their own language use and ability to communicate in English as well as the language ideologies that guide those perceptions. The ELF lecturers were lecturers of engineering. They teach engineering through English-medium instruction, and their students want to learn engineering from them, not English. It was hypothesized that the ELF lecturers' language ideologies would guide their perceptions of their language use and ability to communicate in English. Three types of language ideologies were identified: standard language ideology, standard English NS language ideology, and English as 'other'. Standard English language ideology has its roots in prescriptivism. It spells out a set of rules that all English speakers must follow in order to have 'correct' English. This ideology is also intertwined in standard English NS language ideology. For NNSs, it means that language proficiency that is not nativelike is seen as 'deficient'. Because of this edict, it was hypothesized that the lecturers in this study might have positive or negative self-perceptions of their English language use and ability to communicate, according to how close their perceptions of their English language is to that which they considered to be the standard.

Previous studies on ELT teachers regarding NNSs' self-perceptions of their own language showed that NNSs often experience anxiety and low self-perception if they are uncomfortable with their usage of the target language. A bias in favor of NS norms contributes to these feelings. However, other research shows that NNSs need not worry about their English since other factors are also important in lecturing, such as an ability to teach and being professional. This is a positive factor that NNS lecturers need to recognize.

Against this background, this paper examined the self-perception of three ELF lecturers. Lecturer A saw his pronunciation as his main weakness. He also saw fluency as being a potential problem, but one that he could overcome by using alternative words or explanations. For him, the most important point was to communicate his ideas clearly to his students. He believes he can best achieve this by speaking with correct grammar. While he believes that the NS is a good model, it is not his goal to speak like a NS.

Unlike the other lecturers, Lecturer B aspires to speak British English. She believes her ability to speak correct English is important. However, she acknowledges that it is not important to be able to speak like a NS for her work. Although she says

she speaks English fluently in her lectures, she requested help with fluency in the pilot-mentoring program. In addition, some of her responses indicate that she lacks confidence in her English.

Lecturer C has worked for eleven years in a multicultural work environment where he regularly used his English. He feels he needs help with fluency, but does not view perfect grammar as important. Neither does he find it important to have a nativelike accent. He feels that the purpose of lecturing is to give a good lecture, not to show that you have good English. He is more concerned with how the students experience his teaching. While he is comfortable speaking with NNSs, he is uncomfortable with NSs and feels pressure to conform to NS standards when visiting NS countries.

This paper found some commonalities between these ELF lecturers. All three lecturers view speaking with correct language as important. This, however, does not entail having perfect grammar. ELF Lecturers also considered speaker credibility to be important. However, only two lecturers associated credibility with speaking correctly. None of the lecturers felt that it was important to speak like a NS for the purposes of their work. All three also mentioned that they avoid using idioms when speaking with other NNSs. All three lecturers saw some weaknesses in their own use of English and ability to communicate. All of the lecturers have absorbed prescriptivism in one form or another: Lecturer A states that he tries to be as grammatically correct as possible; Lecturer B states that she believes it is important to speak correctly; and Lecturer C revealed that he would like to speak more correctly when speaking with NSs. Furthermore, in assessing their own language use and ability to communicate, they tend to use NS targets as the measure to some extent: Lecturer A would like for his pronunciation to be more nativelike; Lecturer B clearly has an NS target (British English) as her aim; and Lecturer C thinks it would be nice to sound more nativelike.

Lecturers' self-perceptions changed depending on what they chose as the standard measure. When measuring their own performances against standard English NS norms, they tended to point out their weaknesses and negative perceptions of their language use. When measuring their own performances against another standard, such as the average Finnish speaker of English, the view was more positive. Although they each had their strengths and weaknesses, none of them held themselves strictly to either prescriptivism or standard English NS language ideology. However, Lecturer B, who had had ten years of English at school, seemed to adhere to these ideologies more than the other two who had had much less training in English at school. Conversely, Lecturer C with his lengthy experience using ELF while working in a multicultural group displayed more tendencies towards an English as 'other' language ideology, and seemed to be more positive in his views on his own language use and ability to communicate in English.

As Mizuno's (2004) study pointed out, other factors are more important in lecturing than native speakerism, and the findings from this study lend support to this point as all three ELF lecturers felt that linguistic form was secondary to the ability to communicate and to teach. This is positive as it is important for ELF lecturers to recognize and to have confidence in their professional abilities.

Notes

1   Kachru (1992) proposed a three-circle model of English: Inner circle (ENL norm-provider), Outer circle (norm-dependent), and Expanding circle (norm-developing).

2   Phenomenography is a qualitative research approach, the aim of which is to study experience directly and at face value. In this approach, a subject's behavior is determined by the phenomena of experience as opposed to being determined by objective and "physically described reality" (Cohen et al. 2007: 22).

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