

**The use of English in the working life of Finnish
engineers**

Milja Mero
University of Tampere
School of Language, Translation and Literary Studies
Master's Programme in English Language, Literature and Translation
Master's Thesis
October 2016

Tampereen yliopisto
Kieli-, käännös- ja kirjallisuustieteiden yksikkö
Englannin kieli ja kirjallisuus

Mero, Milja: ”The use of English in the working life of Finnish engineers”

Pro gradu –tutkielma, 81 sivua + 6 liitesivua
Lokakuu 2016

Englannin kielestä on kehittynyt maailmanlaajuinen yhteinen kieli, jota myös suomalaiset insinöörit työelämässään hyödyntävät. Englannin globaalin roolin vuoksi ei-äidinkieliä kielen puhujia on huomattavasti enemmän kuin äidinkieliä, joten ei-äidinkielisten puhujat käyttävät todennäköisemmin englannin kieltä keskenään kuin äidinkielisten kanssa. Tämä toimii englanti lingua francana (English as a lingua franca, ELF) -tutkimuksen lähtökohtana. ELF perustuu ajatukseen siitä, ettei englanti ole yksinoikeudella vain äidinkielisten puhujiensa omistuksessa. ELF viittaakin nimenomaan ei-äidinkielisten käyttämään englantiin. Niinpä ELF-tutkimus pyrkii edistämään näiden ELF-puhujien muodostaman enemmistön hyväksyntää englannin täysivaltaisina puhujina. ELF-teoria toimii tämän pro gradu -tutkimuksen viitekehyksenä, sillä tutkimus lähtee liikkeelle siitä olettamuksesta, että myös suomalaiset insinöörit käyttävät englantia eniten ELF-kontekstissa.

Tutkimus käsittelee suomalaisten insinöörien työelämäenglantia analysoimalla laadullisesti seitsemää teemahaastattelua. Lähtökohtana oli vertailla saatuja tuloksia kyselytutkimukseen, jonka perusteella insinööriopiskelijat suhtautuisivat myönteisesti ELF:n huomioon ottavaan opetukseen. Vertailun tarkoituksena oli selvittää, antavatko työelämässä koetut kielivaatimukset pohjaa opiskelijoiden kokemukselle ELF:n tärkeydestä.

Tutkimuksen insinöörit käyttävät englantia eniten ja mieluiten muiden ELF-puhujien kanssa. Tutkimuksessa ilmeni, että insinöörit tarvitsevat englantia monissa erilaisissa työtehtävissä. He hyödyntävät sekä kielen ymmärtämisen että tuottamisen taitojaan. Pääosin he ovat tyytyväisiä kielitaitoonsa, mutta korostavat, että taidot ovat kehittyneet pääasiassa työelämän ansiosta. Insinöörit kritisoivat insinöörikoulutuksen tarjoaman englannin opetuksen vähäistä määrää ja suosittelevat panostamaan erityisesti suulliseen kommunikaatioon.

Aikaisempi tutkimus (Mero 2013) osoittaa, että insinööriopiskelijat voisivat olla valmiita opetukseen, joka keskittyisi englannin kansainväliseen rooliin ja luopuisi äidinkielisten puhujan tavoitteista. Tämän tutkimuksen tulos puolestaan viittaa siihen, että työelämän todellisuus tukee opiskelijoiden asenteita ja toiveita. Tutkimuksen insinöörit ilmaisivat selkeästi, että ELF on työelämässä englannin käytön painopiste. Toisin sanoen tämänhetkinen ammattikielen opetus ei täysin vastaa työelämän tarpeisiin. Askel kohti parempaa olisi tietoisuuden herättäminen luokkahuoneissa ja päättävien tahojen keskuudessa englannin kielen muuttuneesta luonteesta.

Avainsanat: työelämä, insinööri, ELF, haastattelututkimus, teemahaastattelu

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Theoretical Background.....	5
2.1	Definition of ELF: attitudes and teaching.....	6
2.2	ELF in Finland	13
2.3	Professional context in Finland.....	16
3	Material and methods	21
3.1	Compilation of the material and analysis.....	21
3.2	Restrictions of the data	28
4	Analysis.....	31
4.1	Speaker backgrounds and contexts for using English.....	31
4.2	English competence	36
4.2.1	Describing own English skills and other people's expectations.....	37
4.2.2	Wishes and worries about English skills	39
4.2.3	Comparing English skills to those of other people.....	41
4.3	Attitudes and experiences	42
4.3.1	Keeping to a specific variety of English.....	42
4.3.2	The relevance of grammatical correctness and its relation to confidence ...	44
4.3.3	Feelings about using English at work.....	48
4.3.4	Using English more with native or non-native people	50
4.3.5	The effect of working life on feelings about using English and belief in the development of English skills.....	55
4.3.6	Discussing language skills and situations regarding language use with colleagues	57
4.4	English language teaching and learning	59
4.4.1	Skills enabled by ELT, ELT experiences and suggestions for the focus of it	59
4.4.2	Comments on the higher education ELT and contexts for gaining English skills	61
4.5	Need for updating training.....	67
5	Discussion	70
5.1	Interpretation of the analysis.....	70
5.2	Comparison with engineering students' assumptions and opinions	73
6	Conclusions.....	78
	References.....	82
	Appendices	86

1 Introduction

English has become the uncontested global lingua franca, a fact stated already years ago by various researchers, such as Graddol (2000:8) and Seidlhofer (2005:339).

Approximately only one out of every four users of English is a native speaker of the language (Crystal 2003:69), which means that most interaction takes place among non-native speakers of English. Due to its international usage, English is shaped at least as much by its non-native speakers as by its native speakers (Seidlhofer 2005:339). Hence, some researchers have started to consider English as a lingua franca (hereafter ELF) as an emerging variety of its own (Prodromou 2008:28). In fact, Breiteneder (2009:266) further argues that even “ELF in Europe (or anywhere else for that matter) is – – an entirely natural development in the glocalization of English.” By ‘glocalization’ she means the combination of globalization and localization.

Despite the evident importance of ELF, empirical studies of ELF remain relatively few in number (Murray 2012:319). The works by Jenkins (2000), Prodromou (2010), Mauranen (2003) and Björkman (2008), to mention a few, are ground-breaking in that sense. However, according to Murray (2012: 319), there is a lot of discussion, not only at ideological and descriptive levels, but at pedagogical level as well. Murray (2012: 319) points out that there has been an increase in the amount of literature seeking to address issues concerning the pedagogical implications of ELF. Jenkins (2012), Groom (2012), Subtirelu (2013) are some examples of more recent studies. This growing interest seems to suggest the relevance of ELF in English language teaching (ELT) for L2 (language 2/second language) learners.

The increasing significance of English and ELF has been the inspiration for the present study, too. The aim of this study is to find out how Finnish engineers use English in their working life. The information was collected by conducting an interview, and the results will be the focus of this thesis. However, the aim is also to compare the results with what Finnish engineering students think and predict about the role of English in their working life. The latter aim will be reached with the help of my Bachelor's Thesis whose material was compiled at the Faculty of Technology at Lahti University of Applied Sciences (Mero, 2013). One of the aims of gathering information on the matter was to examine the possible need to include ELF in ELT. Hence, three research questions were formed:

- What kind of a role does English play in Finnish engineers' working life?
- How do/ Do the assumptions and opinions of students differ from the experiences of engineers in working life?
- Is there a need to include ELF in the ELT in Finnish engineering education?

Discussing the requirements of working life compared to the students' assumptions also lead to discussion on teaching. My hypothesis is that ELT should focus more on ELF. This is based on previous research (such as Riemer 2002), and my BA thesis, since both the students and professionals showed a need to communicate effectively with non-native speakers.

Valtaranta (2013) conducted a study on the experiences of Finnish engineers as language users in a professional context, where she touches upon similar themes to this thesis. The same way as this research, Valtaranta (2013:15) "was not

concerned to examine and dissect language or communication as such, but sought to look beyond linguistics, endeavouring to elucidate human meaning-making processes, and more specifically the way people account for their experiences of language use”. The challenge with this approach is that the interviewees, as all people, have subjective views of the world, to which these meaning-making processes are tied. Therefore, according to Lehtovaara (1996, quoted in Valtaranta 2013:15), the views “can never be fully conveyed to others, but are in principle open only to the experiencing people themselves”.

Hence, this thesis can merely glimpse the working lives of the interviewees as they have experienced them and as they have agreed to reveal them in their interviews. Similar to Valtaranta (ibid.), the study was not built upon a narrative framework as such, even though the interviewees agreed to narrate on tape events from their lives. Thus, as Valtaranta (ibid.) states, “the outcomes cannot be described here as any one person’s story”, but as an account for the essences that constituted the experiences of the interviewees as English users in engineering jobs as they described them. One of the differences between Valtaranta’s (ibid.) study and this one is that the focus here is only on the experiences of using English in working life, whereas Valtaranta’s focus is more broadly “on the experiences of language users”. Working as a motivator for both researches is that “The lives of education and work have been drifting ever further, and it has been argued that teachers need to possess more field-specific and up-to-date knowledge of working life today” (Collin, Paloniemi, Virtanen & Eteläpelto 2008; Hyvärinen 2011 quoted in Valtaranta 2013:15).

The structure of the thesis is as follows: First, the background is presented in Chapter 2. The material and the methods will be discussed in Chapter 3. The results

will be analysed in Chapter 4, and discussed in Chapter 5. Finally, Chapter 6 includes the conclusions, which will contain some speculation on what the results suggest for the role of ELF in ELT.

2 Theoretical Background

The working life of Finnish engineers has its demands on the English teaching of engineers. The theoretical framework of this study is, thus, obviously connected to the field of professional language and teaching it. As Valtaranta (2013:16) explains,

Terminology in the field is perplexing, with some researchers preferring to move away from the traditional terms Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) towards terms such as Professional Discourse and Professional Communication (Gunnarsson 2011, 29), English for Occupational Purposes (Dudley-Evans & St John 2007), or Language and Communication for Professional Purposes (Huhta 2010), though all these are often seen as stemming from ESP.

This study uses the term professional language, as it seems like a simple descriptive option. Malyuga (2012:7) argues that many terms such as professional language, sub language, professional dialect, professional speech, professional style, and specialised language are in fact identical. She also states that scholars are unanimous about professional language being a type of a social dialect or sociolect, often perceived as a terminology system (ibid.). Valtaranta (2013:16) draws upon Jaatinen (2007:55-56), who professes that professionally oriented language teachers need to have an understanding of their students' future professions to be able to answer its demands in their teaching. Thus, also English teachers have to think about what a good professional in a certain field is like, and what contents are worth teaching, and how (Valtaranta 2013:16-17).

2.1 Definition of ELF: attitudes and teaching

Since ELF is so prominently present in the findings of this study, this chapter will define the basic use of the term. ELF refers to the use of English between people who do not share the same first language. Jenkins (2006:160) defines ELF as “a contact language used among non-mother tongue speakers”. There is, however, a less ‘restricted’ way of defining ELF, since many scholars accept that native English speakers can also participate in ELF communication (Jenkins 2006:161). What seems to be more important, though, is that ELF is fundamentally perceived as a communicative instrument (Kuo 2006:215). Breiteneder’s (2009:263) statement supports this view:

[w]hen speakers who belong to different linguacultures enter into intercultural communication situations, it seems that their focus often shifts to communicative effectiveness and economy instead of markers of prestige and social status.

This serves as a good example on how ELF scholars perceive the role of ELF as a means for economical and successful information exchange as a product of natural progression in the language. Breiteneder (2009) and Kuo (2006), however, are not the only scholars underlining the communicative nature of ELF. The idea about concentrating on intelligibility and the effectiveness of communication in language learning has caused many scholars to question the native speakers’ ownership of the language (Kuo 2006:214). Thus, the irrelevance of the leading role of native speakers has been one of the principal topics in ELF research (ibid.).

This view is supported by the fact that English is a language for international communication, and nowadays the number of its non-native speakers outnumber the amount of native speakers. In addition, the fact that most non-native speakers will need English in order to communicate with other non-native speakers

makes conforming to native-speaker norms rather unnecessary in many scholars' opinion (ibid.). Hence, it may well be that concentrating on intelligibility, and the economy and effectiveness of communication rather than grammatical correctness are factors contributing to the increasing appeal of ELF.

Nevertheless, several misinterpretations of ELF have persisted (Jenkins 2009:202). Firstly, one misunderstanding has been that ELF scholars gather data and codify ELF to be able to teach its features to English learners (ibid.). According to Jenkins (ibid.), however, this is not the case. Secondly, as Jenkins (ibid.) states:

-- a number of scholars working within the field of WE argue that ELF is monolithic and monocentric, a 'monomodel' in which 'intercultural communication and cultural identity are to be made a necessary casualty' (Rubdy and Saraceni 2006: 11). This seems to me to be a strange interpretation of ELF, as it is Inner Circle models such as 'standard' British and American English and their respective 'standard' accents, RP (Received Pronunciation) and GA (General American), that are monomodels and which regularly make casualties of Expanding Circle speakers' identities. (2009: 202; WE refers to World Englishes)

Thirdly, Jenkins (ibid.) notes that according to another false perception, ELF embodies errors wherever it departs from certain native-speaker Englishes, usually British and American. This position does not make any distinction between ELF and EFL (English as a foreign language), although "English learnt for intercultural communication (ELF) – where native English speakers may be, but often are not, present in the interaction – and English learnt specifically for communication with English native speakers (EFL)" are different by default (Jenkins 2009:202-203).

Jenkins (2009:203) notes that the problem with this misinterpretation is the belief that "any differences from native speaker English in the speech of ELF speakers have exactly the same status as differences from native speaker English in EFL

speakers: that is, they are by definition deficiencies rather than legitimate ELF variants”. However, she points out that the people with this perception used to say the same kind of comments about Indian English among others. Thus, Jenkins appears to think it is only a matter of time until ELF will have the status of a legitimate variety of English with its own norms of use. (Jenkins 2009:203)

For now, according to Jenkins (2009:203-204), an attachment to the so-called standard varieties remains among many non-native English speakers, despite the fact that they no longer study English to communicate primarily with its native speakers. On the one hand, there is substantial juxtaposition in the fact that alongside the want or need to speak like a native, ELF speakers also express the wish to reflect their own local identity in their English. Some of them actually feel they belong to a community of ELF users. (Jenkins 2009:204) On the other hand, many professionals working internationally experience ELF as non-controversial (Jenkins 2009:202). The fact that their positive attitudes are rarely verbalised or published may have a significant impact on what the attitudes towards ELF are generally thought to be like. In other words, the general discussion on ELF is affected by the negative responses, which are published most often, mainly from within the field of English studies. (ibid.)

As Seidlhofer (2005:339) declares, the vast majority of verbal exchanges in English do not involve any native speakers of the language at all. Thus, there is undeniably a somewhat paradoxical situation of having the majority of English speakers using it as a foreign language and the tendency for native speakers to be regarded as a model for what is acceptable usage (ibid.). This fact has led to there having been increasing debates about the status of ELF from the point of view of teaching as well. In

fact, the opinions of ELF speakers themselves are not necessarily explicit. Jenkins (2009:204) comments on interviewing young English teachers, most of whose feelings about their English were rather ambivalent. This ambivalence was due to feeling obligated to acquire a 'near-native' accent, which led them to be unable to separate the notion of good language from that of native language (ibid.).

There have, however, been suggestions on how to approach ELF from the point of view of teaching. Ur (2010:87), for example, lists four possible models that have been suggested for teaching and learning ELF: one mainstream native variety, a "common core" syllabus based on common non-native usages, a combination of different models, and a standard international variety. The problem is there is no consensus on which the appropriate variety to teach would be.

According to Ur (2010:87), the first option, teaching one mainstream native variety, is probably still the most widely used. It is based on either standard British or American English, which is not hard to believe, as they are the two most prestigious varieties. Compared to the first suggestion, the second option (a "common core" syllabus) is based on a very different perspective. On the one hand, it appears to be a less exclusive model, since it takes into account all common non-native usages. On the other hand, as Ur (2010:88) notes, its downside is that most teachers do not accept for example 'she go' as an appropriate learner variant. According to Ur, this is not because 'she goes' is "a native-speaker usage unnaturally and unjustifiably imposed by a powerful native-speaker minority" (ibid.), but simply because teachers consider 'she goes' the most universally accepted correct form, and therefore use it themselves as well.

The third model, teaching a combination of different models, exposes learners to diverse varieties of English (2010:88). According to Ur, this option is widely favoured in the literature discussing the topic. To support this claim, she quotes Prodromou's statement on how it is time we "recognised the diversity among users and the multiplicity of uses to which English is put worldwide". (ibid.) This means we should think in terms of varied processes of interaction which all users of ELF would have to follow. Ur (2010:89) explains that the popularity of this model is based on ideological reasons. She says that because people are usually in favour of pluralism, diversity and heterogeneity, they tend to reject single standards or any kind of unified models. Is it, nevertheless, a practical model for teaching purposes? Ur (ibid.) professes English teachers cannot teach a variety of usages, as they simply do not have enough time.

According to Ur (2010:89), the fourth option, teaching a world standard international variety, is the best one, because it comprises usages (including a range of options, as suggested above) that are accepted in most international contexts. Ur claims it is achievable for learners, unlike a native dialect. However, it is not the most popular or accepted model and it has various disadvantages. Ur notes that to supporters of pluralism and diversity this option is ideologically unacceptable. In fact, she says, many claim it does not even exist, partly because it has not been systematically codified. (ibid.)

Despite the issue being a rather complex one, some scholars seem to have rather strong opinions and preferences. Jenkins (2006) and Kuo (2006), for example, have somewhat different opinions on the implications of ELF on ELT. On the one hand, in Jenkins's (2006) opinion, the biggest problem will be to find a way to incorporate an ELF perspective into testing. She sees examination boards as the key to this

development. All in all, Jenkins's main argument appears to be that the monocentric perspective and the belief in native speaker ownership have to be replaced with new ways of defining an expert speaker of English. (Jenkins 2006:171-173)

Kuo (2006), on the other hand, seems to think quite differently. She is not strictly against regarding ELF in ELT, but she is certainly criticizing ELF. Compared to Jenkins she actually judges ELF quite harshly:

A native-speaker model, however, as I have illustrated in this article, would appear to be more appropriate and appealing in second language pedagogy than a description of English which is *somewhat reduced and incomplete*. (2006:220; my italics)

Moreover, Kuo claims the description of ELF overlooks some aspects of language and is restricted to the very instrumental function of English, namely international communication (2006: 215). "English as a lingua franca -- is interesting and revealing but does not necessarily have implications for teaching", Kuo (2006: 217) states. She also points out the fact that to be able to teach ELF we need ELF grammar, and to codify it we need corpora and dictionaries. As a matter of fact, there has been development compared to the situation in 2006 when Kuo wrote her article. For example, the VOICE corpus (*Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English* 2013, version 2.0 Online) has made empirical studies easier to conduct. Nonetheless, Kuo (2006:215) insists on a native speaker model by stating that "L2 learners should be allowed, if not encouraged, to follow a native-speaker phonological or grammatical model". In her view, it serves as a complete and convenient starting point (ibid.).

All in all, the most relevant topics for the future of ELF in language teaching seem to be codification and awareness. The availability of descriptions and

codification of ELF is seen as a key factor by many scholars. However, some scholars contradict this general perception. Leyland (2011:42), for example, claims that the findings in his study “suggest that in ELF interactions, for intelligibility, standardization is not necessary”. By standardization he refers to descriptions enabled by codification. Thus, it seems he does not consider codification crucial for the future of ELF.

Many scholars also see awareness as a key factor for the future of ELF. Cogo (2012:104), nevertheless, reminds us that we should not only be making people aware of ELF, but rather of different ways of speaking English, and of language variability and change. She says ELF academics have not just been urging the teaching of ELF, because “ELF is about awareness and choice” (ibid.). This means students can choose to speak like native speakers if they want to, but they may want to speak ELF, which may even be more appropriate in some situations (ibid.).

According to McKay (2002:41), the prevalent assumption that the goal of English language learning is to gain native-like competence must be put aside. She says this is important for two reasons. Firstly, the whole notion of native speaker in itself is problematic. Secondly, the assumption that everyone needs or desires native speaker competence will not contribute to a better understanding of the learners’ various language needs. Indeed, it seems reasonable to state that native speaker competence does not have to be the goal for everyone. For most L2 learners it is not possible to know for sure whether they are going to use English with native speakers or not.

2.2 ELF in Finland

The role, visibility, and impact of English have been steadily growing in Finland since the early 20th century (Leppänen et al. 2011:169). According to Leppänen et al. (2011: abstract), English has a strong presence in Finland, as it is the most widely studied and most commonly used foreign language. English has been a compulsory subject in the Finnish primary and secondary education since the 1970s. The majority (around 90%) of Finnish pupils in primary education choose English as their first foreign language. The figure has long remained the same. (Ranta 2010:159)

A national survey conducted by Leppänen et al. (2011) reveals that Finns assess their own English skills as comparatively good: about 60 % of Finns consider their proficiency at least relatively good (Leppänen et al. 2011:161). This figure is notably higher than, for example, Eurobarometer results from 2006, “according to which only 38 % of EU citizens think they have sufficient skills in English to engage in a conversation” (ibid.). Additionally, it is interesting that despite the general satisfaction about the proficiency in English, almost all Finns wanted to improve their skills (ibid.). The reason for this is probably that Finns are aware that their skills are not good enough in all kinds of communicative situations (ibid.).

General attitudes towards English seem to be quite positive and pragmatic in Finland. English is not considered a threat to Finnish language or culture. Quite the contrary, English skills are seen as an essential resource in the increasingly multicultural and globalizing world. (Leppänen et al. 2011: abstract) However, there are some socio-demographic differences in the proficiency and the use of English. Younger generations and people in the cities, who are at least relatively well educated and whose professional

position is managerial or expert, belong to the most proficient group with the highest rate of English usage. Many Finns need English in their work and education, but the importance of English has increased in media, too (Leppänen et al. 2011:125, 153). Leppänen et al. (2011:162) also mention that English is often used just for fun, for everyday interaction and language learning, although these situations usually involve some sort of international contact.

Due to the fast development of information and communication technologies, English has also spread into the daily life of Finns (Leppänen et al. 2011:163). At the same time, though, a small minority who have not studied English at all can be identified. These people evaluate their skills in English as minimal and say they do not need or use the language much. They are typically older people with little education. All in all, Leppänen et al. (2011: abstract) put their findings into three broad respondent categories: the ‘haves’, ‘have-nots’, and ‘have-it-alls’ of English.

One of the most internationally interesting results of the survey mentioned above is how positively Finns view English (Leppänen et al. 2011:159). Leppänen et al. (ibid.) compare the situation of Finland to that of many other non-English speaking countries, such as Sweden and France, and note that the Finns’ attitudes seem to be more relaxed. In fact, Leppänen et al. (2011:168) suggest that Finns have such a positive attitude towards English, and that certain groups use English so actively, that Finland could be considered a country where English has the status of a second language or of a “third national language” rather than a foreign language. As Leppänen et al. (ibid.) conclude, it is truly interesting to speculate what happens to the importance of English in the future, when all Finns will have studied it.

As is to be expected, from the 1940s to the present day, English teaching in Finland has emphasized the native-speaker ideal (Ranta 2010:159). At the same time, however, the international value and the lingua franca function of English have also been highlighted in the curricula since the 1960s. For example, the curriculum from 1964 states that English is useful with other non-native English-speaking foreigners, too. Likewise, the comprehensive school curriculum for the 1990s emphasizes the importance of knowing English for ‘international relations’. (Ranta 2010:160)

The present study is more concerned with the ELT at universities of applied sciences, and, therefore, it seems reasonable to quote some suggestions for the general competence requirements for the degrees of Finnish universities of applied sciences. Arene, the Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences, makes recommendations on the development of Finnish higher education system and promotes a closer cooperation between the universities of applied sciences (Arene online). Arene (2010:8) recommends that the graduates’ internationalization competence should cover “language competence demanded by the work assignments of the field”, “the ability to cooperate multiculturally”, and “the ability to take into account the effects and possibilities of the internationalization process of the field” (my translations). This implies that ELT at this level should help students reach an international competence of English. It could be claimed that, in practice, part of it has to do with the global use of the language and with whom the students are going to communicate using it, in other words, ELF. The following section will discuss the professional context of engineers in Finland and the requirements it poses on their professional English.

2.3 Professional context in Finland

As Huhta (2010: abstract) notes, “globalization requires more effective communication competences of professionals, and therefore education - be it higher education or corporate training - takes an interest in efficient competence building”. Riemer (2002:91) is of the same opinion, as he states that academia and industry recognise the vitalness of communication skills. According to him, “a global engineer must be able to easily cross national and cultural boundaries”, because globalisation directly influences industry’s needs (ibid.). He says that in order to communicate effectively with different speakers of English, engineers should also be aware of the different varieties of the language around the world. English skills are also important given the widespread status of the language across the globe as a lingua franca. (ibid.)

This view is furthermore supported by Nirupama (2015:40) who underlines the importance of communication skills by stating that “Engineers are required to perform not only in technical capacities but also in the non-technical capacities”. He points out that the changing role of engineers in society places new kinds of pressures on engineering faculties in the universities around the world. He justifies this claim by drawing attention to the rapid globalization of the world’s economy, which has a significant impact on the way engineers work. (ibid.) Given the nature of globalization it appears natural to assume it also affects the work of a Finnish engineer.

As a matter of fact, judging by the mere amount of speakers, engineers are more likely to use English with non-native speakers than native ones. According to Statista, a statistics portal, only 375 million are native speakers of the total number of

1,500 million English speakers in 2016 (Statista 2016). Thus, the role of English as a lingua franca is undeniable in the ever-globalizing working life of engineers.

Based on the above, it is self-evident that an engineer aiming towards an international career should strive for excellent skills in English, and that knowledge of ELF varieties could help him/her. However, this and other research, such as Leppänen and Nikula (2007), prove that ELF is also present in the Finnish scene. According to Leppänen and Nikula (2007:163), Finns use English mainly with foreigners who they do not have other common language with. Yet, some engineering students might not realize just how likely it is they are going to use English in their work in the future (Mero 2013:13). In a questionnaire study (ibid.) 88% of engineering students believed they were going to use English mostly with non-native speakers in the future, but when asked in what contexts they thought they were going to need English, they predicted only a 35% chance for using the language for future work. Therefore, it seems reasonable to argue that more students and engineers working in Finland should be prepared for working life by exposing them more for this aspect of the language.

Another interesting aspect in the English use of engineers is L2 communicative competence. As has been stated, many Finnish engineers require good competence in English which is most often their L2. Having a good L2 competence is usually thought to require competence in lexicon, phonology, syntax and discourse. The priorities for engineers' L2 use determine what sort of a competence they should aim at. In other words, what also needs to be taken into consideration is the purpose for which engineers in Finland learn the language. According to Saville-Troike (2006:135), there is a distinction between at least two fundamental types of communicative competence:

academic competence and interpersonal competence. In other words, communicative competence can be divided into knowledge that must be learned in order to fulfil academic functions and knowledge that is required for interpersonal functions. The contrast in priorities for L2 competences is that reading is typically much more important for academic than for interpersonal needs, and that speaking is usually much more important for interpersonal than for academic purposes. (ibid.)

Saville-Troike (2006:135-136) describes academic L2 competence as learning the L2 primarily to use it as a tool for learning other things or as a medium in a specific professional field. She says that learners who aim at academic competence should focus primarily on obtaining the specific vocabulary and knowledge that enables them to read relevant texts fluently in their field. Saville-Troike connects the need for academic competence together with studying at an L2-medium university, in which case the learner also has to put a high priority on academic writing and processing oral L2 input i.e. academic listening. She concludes that reading, listening, and writing proficiency, however, do not necessarily require fluent speaking ability, particularly for learners studying the L2 in a foreign language context. (ibid.)

With interpersonal competence Saville-Troike (2006:136) refers to knowledge required of those who use the L2 most in face-to-face situations. Even though the vocabulary required is probably different from academic contexts, it is still the most important language knowledge for these learners to acquire. Speaking and listening are much more likely to play dominant roles in interpersonal production and interpretation even though writing and reading can sometimes be required. Learners striving towards interpersonal competence also have to be able to process language

effectively, and know how to achieve clarification or negotiate meanings. The situation determines whether the language to be used is formal or informal. (ibid.)

According to the interviews of this study, it seems that the ELT received by engineers has tended to focus more on academic competence than interpersonal competence. Many engineering jobs certainly require academic competence, because they include a lot of paperwork which requires both reading and writing. However, the majority of the interviewees show an interest in learning other functions than just the language specific to their field. Some mention problems in small talk and others in everyday language. They seem to think interpersonal competence plays an important role in their work and that it would therefore be useful to give it more emphasis in ELT. That is, it appears that even though the obvious priority for engineers using English in their working life seems to be academic competence, many of them feel it is not enough. This finding resembles the experiences and needs in the English language use of engineers examined by Väänänen (1992), who found out that oral skills, technical terminology and telephoning were the most challenging aspects of English use among mechanical engineers.

In order to meet modern requirements, the engineering education in Finland went through an update in the so-called Polytechnic Reform during 2011-2014, where one of the goals was to narrow down the divide between working life and education (Valtaranta 2013:26). The findings of this study, further enlightened from Chapter 4 onwards, lend support for this kind of aims. As Valtaranta (2013:22) states, language studies at universities of applied sciences in Finland have been examined both from the viewpoint of language learners and from that of language teachers (e.g.

Löfström et al. 2002; Kantelinen & Mertanen 2007; Simon & Vuorela 2008; Kantelinen & Airola 2008). However, it is noteworthy that less research has been conducted from the perspective of language users and not focusing on the communication they produce but their subjective experiences instead (Valtaranta 2013:26). Therefore, the present study approaches the topic from this perspective.

3 Material and methods

This chapter discusses the material and the research methods of this thesis. Chapter 3.1 presents the material and explains the ways and phases in which it has been compiled and analyzed, whereas 3.2 looks into the restrictions of the data.

3.1 Compilation of the material and analysis

The aim of this thesis was to gain insight into the changing, global role of English (as suggested by the ELF view) by conducting an interview research on the use of English and the experiences and attitudes of Finnish engineers. The study was carried out by recording ten theme interviews with engineers from three different Finnish companies with international operations. For the sake of anonymity, the names of the firms have not been included and the names of the participants have been changed. The interviewees were aged between 28-56, and two of them were female and eight male. The gender distribution does not produce varying results in this study, and it is not intended to make any kind of a statement on gender issues regarding the working life of engineers, for gender differences are not in the centre of the theme of this research.

Three of the participants, two sales managers (male) and one sales engineer (female), were from the sales department of a wholesale company selling HVAC products (heating, ventilation and air conditioning), municipal infrastructure and pipe products for industry. It is a leading company in the Nordic countries and around the Baltic Sea. Many of its salespeople have to use English on a daily basis. Another interviewee (male) using English daily was the head of design at a globally leading supplier of plants and services for the hydropower, pulp and paper, metals, and other

specialized industries. The rest of the participants were from a globally operating, high technology company serving process industry. Their participants were a former Quality and Data Administration Manager (female), two Senior Sales Managers, a Design manager, an Automation engineer and a Mechanical design engineer.

As to the interviews, they consisted of 14 open-ended questions and two option based questions. The original Finnish interview questions are included in the appendix after the bibliography. Affected by the theme interview approach and its goal of gathering naturally occurring and detailed answers, the duration of the sessions varied from 20 minutes to one hour. It was important to create an atmosphere where the interviewees felt they could take their time in thinking, responding or even going back to the previous questions. The same idea was behind the language choice. The interviews were done in Finnish in order to have as relaxed and thus honest discussions as possible.

Since this interview research is a theme interview, the analysis will be qualitative. In other words, the study is interpretive in nature, since quantifiable information is not the goal of qualitative interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009:30). Valtaranta (2013:26) justifies the use of this method by saying it enables looking at professional contexts and identifying ways of experiencing and using foreign languages at work. Thus, even though the findings of qualitative studies cannot be generalized, their information can be used, for example, in constructing language education for engineers and “socializing them towards their professional identities” (ibid.).

The study itself consists of a single phase where the participants present individual accounts of their use of English. For a more multidimensional outcome, see

Valtaranta's (2013) work which comprises two phases, the individual and a general phase. The latter phase shifts its focus from the individual accounts to knowledge shared by all the participants of the study (Valtaranta 2013:5).

The stages of analysis in this study were inspired by the more complicated method in Valtaranta's (2013:58) research. First, I read through the data with a phenomenological attitude, which means marking keywords and sentences, and reducing less meaningful parts of the data from the analysis. Second, I began identifying meaning relations in the data by interpreting what the respondents had answered to the questions. Unlike Valtaranta (2013:60), who identified a new unit whenever she detected a transition of meaning in the text, I focused on gathering the meanings that seemed most relevant to the question. Hence, Valtaranta's analysis (2013:62-68) ends up registering shorter units than this study. Table 1. below shows some specific examples of my interpretation process.

Valtaranta (2013:58) numbered and classified each meaning relation under a theme. My third stage, however, was classifying the meanings under the corresponding interview questions. This had to be done because the free nature of the interview discussions allowed the interviewees sometimes cover other questions when answering other questions. The fourth stage was to classify the interview questions into theme groups which form the chapter distribution of the thesis. Among other things, Valtaranta (2013:79) also formed "individually experienced professional language use portrayals" from meaning networks, but this study did not strive towards such detail. My fifth aim was to compare the meanings under each question, and build a sense of the whole. Since the respondents had differing opinions, in many cases, I did not arrive at a generalization, but rather stated the findings of the comparison. Generalizations were

made only if there was a clear judgement to be made, such as “most of the respondents criticize ELT”. The result of these stages was arriving at some conclusions about the topic of this thesis.

Table 1. Examples of analysing the data with a phenomenological attitude (model chart Valtaranta 2013:62)

Tarmo’s interview	Meaning relations
<p>M: Well is there any difference in your skills if you think about talking, writing and comprehension, for example?</p> <p>T: Well it is the easiest to read and to write so then it depends on the other party when you listen to some Chinese person’s English it can be hard to understand and then it’s the same thing if there’s some native English speaker Americans they start to talk terribly fast and then they too have those own dialects and extraordinary words that you don’t necessarily understand so you understand better those kinds of people who also speak English as a foreign language it’s somehow simpler the language</p> <p>M: What do you mean with it being simpler? T: Well if I speak English for example with a German he speaks it a lot more meticulously than some Scot.</p> <p>M: Ok is the meticulousness does it</p>	<p>According to Tarmo, there are both difficult non-native and native accents. Yet, he thinks it is generally easier to understand non-native accents than native ones.</p>

<p>have something to do with? </p> <p>T: The pronunciation It's hard for me to understand those kinds of really exotic accents especially Chinese if they speak bad English it's really impossible or with an Indian</p> <p> M: So what does it feel like to use English? What feelings has it evoked or have those feelings changed?</p> <p> T: Well it's not a nice thing to say but I've started to feel that well you know it's a language that everybody speaks</p> <p> M: Mm-m</p> <p> T: So that when some American doesn't know any foreign language he/she knows only his/her own English so sometimes you get that kind of a feeling that that person doesn't know any language it makes you or I've maybe started to undermine English a little because in my opinion it's not like that kind of or sometimes how should you say it that when you think some person doesn't speak anything but English they're missing something</p> <p>M: Mm-m What do you think your colleagues think?</p>	<p>In Tarmo's opinion the simple nature of ELF does not necessarily mean that it is simple language per se even though it is easier for him to understand. This seems to be the case because he makes the distinction between comprehensible German ELF and incomprehensible Scottish and fast American speech.</p> <p>Tarmo does not think it is extraordinary to have good skills in English.</p> <p>Neither does he consider it enough that some people speak nothing but English.</p>
---	---

<p>T: I've not dared to start bad-mouthing like that publically (gives a laugh)</p> <p> M: Well whom do you rather do business with then? (natives or non-natives)</p> <p>T: I'd rather do business with non-natives because it really is easier for ME to understand that bad English than fast spoken native speech</p>	<p>He sees his own opinions on the subject as degrading.</p> <p>Although Tarmo's perception on ELF is rather negative, he insists on it being less complicated to work with non-native English speakers than native ones.</p>
---	---

This thesis also compares the findings from the interviews to those from my BA thesis (Mero 2013) in Chapter 5. It was carried out by conducting a descriptive survey that sought to study engineering students' attitudes towards ELF at Lahti University of Applied Sciences. The data was gathered using a questionnaire, which is the primary method used in aiming to find out about people's opinions and attitudes. In descriptive survey research, data are not gathered to test a hypothesis. Rather, conclusions are drawn based on participant responses. (Lodico et al. 2006: 12) All answers were counted manually. The sample includes 86 respondents, 22 of whom are women and 59 men. One respondent stated 'other' for gender, and four people did not fill in the field. The average age of the respondents is 23.3 years with a range from 20 to 39. Prior to LUAS, 27 respondents had attended vocational school and 61 upper secondary school.

The combined number exceeds the total number of respondents, because some of them have dual qualification.

A questionnaire-based study by Ranta (2010) served as a model for the questionnaire which includes 11 questions with alternative answers, three of which also include space for motivating the answer. The questionnaire consists of 2 parts; the first part deals with background information, such as the respondents' age, and the second part focuses on the students' attitudes towards ELF. Questions 4-11 in the current survey were adopted from Ranta (*ibid.*) virtually as such, whereas questions 1-3 were slightly modified (see appendix 3). For example, in Question 3, which asked the students to predict with whom they thought they would most likely use English in the future, the 'Undecided' alternative was deleted. This was done because Ranta (2010: 162) points out that the fairly large number of 'Undecided' answers in her study was probably due to the fact that some respondents took advantage of it. According to Ranta (2010:162-163), it is of course justifiable to say that one cannot know what will happen in the future.

My questionnaire, nevertheless, tried to avoid giving the respondents this shortcut. Additionally, the word 'predict' was added to the assignment in order for the informants to feel allowed to be less sure about the future. It should perhaps also be mentioned that all questions were of course modified to suite the target group of the study. In other words, the term 'upper secondary school' was replaced by 'university of applied sciences'. Some of Ranta's questions were not included at all. I did not, for example, ask descriptions about instances where the students had had to communicate with foreigners. However, similar to the original version, terms such as "English as a

lingua franca” and “English as a global language” were avoided and the students’ attitudes were examined in a more implicit way.

3.2 Restrictions of the data

Some issues might admittedly have affected gathering the data. As is sometimes the case, despite the efforts to fade out the hypothesis, the presuppositions of the researcher may distract the respondents. To see whether this has happened in the interviews of this study, we have to ask what was asked and how. One possible place for improvement in this case could be in question 6, beginning with “Do you feel uneasy expressing your thoughts..?”. This kind of phrasing assumes an affirmative answer, and would have been better formed as “What do you feel when..?”. Another slip appears in question 9 “Does the English instruction at a higher level provide students with good abilities...?”, whose more neutral version would have been “What kind of abilities does the...?”. The latter form would have avoided using the juxtaposition of good and bad. In this particular case it was not even about slipping my own attitude into the question, but it, nevertheless, sounds leading. This might possibly have affected some of the answers, but fortunately for this thesis, this question did not render positive answers affirming the apparent assumption.

There might also be something that should have been asked, but was not. Due to trying to be as neutral as possible I sometimes felt it was challenging to react and continue the discussion while maintaining the level of neutrality and not leading the interviewees. Thus, it is possible that I missed some chances for making follow-up questions or requests for further explanations.

In addition, the categorization of the material seemed a bit problematic, not because it would have been difficult to create categories, but because some sets of examples were harder to categorize. An example of such is when one of the participants was asked what kind of English he thought others expect from him, and he turned the discussion into how being understood is the most important thing, how there are English users on varying levels in their company, how it is thus not so simple for them to produce text, especially when it has to be technical English. He continued onto describe how some of his colleagues use Google translate, but how everybody accepts that the language produced does not have to be perfect, because everybody does their best on their own level.

I tried to lead the discussion closer to the question by asking what kind of English he thought for example Indian business partners, which he had talked about, expected from him. The respondent started to describe the good level of English in India, and how the only thing for him with them was to understand their accent. He told how his colleagues have told him the same thing, after which he started to answer the question, but ended up saying: “Then again they understand or what they expect from me, I think it’s easier for them to understand me than it’s for me to understand them and well I kind of speak more so-called school English”. In other words, after a long talk around the issue, the respondent finally ends his answer without answering the actual question. The above description probably reveals the inexperience of the interviewer and/or the challenging formation of the questions. Clearer questions would perhaps have produced more focused answers.

However, as far as I see, this thesis did not have the problem that Valtaranta (2013:41) reports having in her theme interview. She says the interaction

sometimes felt strained and that the interviewees were holding something back. “It sometimes appeared that the interviewee could not get beyond my role of a language teacher and kept addressing his or her comments to me in that role,” Valtaranta (ibid.) explains. Thus, her participants associated her with her teacher identity, and selected “the situationally most salient dimension for the interaction”. She, therefore, tried to avoid being seen as a teacher in by deliberately avoiding questions which would have included connotations of school/language/education (ibid.). I doubt this kind of an approach would have affected my data somehow. I did not notice these words affecting the atmosphere of the interviews in any way. My perception was that the interviewees considered me a ‘mere’ student and younger than themselves, and did not, hence, think of me as someone their possible critique would concern.

4 Analysis

This chapter will look at the interview questions, which are divided into categories according to their themes. The first category consists of the participants' backgrounds and contexts for using English. The second category includes questions related to the participants' English skills, and the third one to their attitudes and experiences. The fourth category continues somewhat on the experiences but narrows them down to the educational experiences of English and suggestions to what ELT for engineers should be like. The last category considers the interviewees' need for updating training.

4.1 Speaker backgrounds and contexts for using English

This chapter looks into the types of work situations and tasks where the interviewees use English. First, to get a fuller picture, it seems worthwhile to mention something about the participants' educational backgrounds. At the time of conducting the interviews, four of the interviewees had a bachelor's degree from a university of applied sciences, three of them had a master's degree from a university, and one of them had received college-level training. Their fields vary from Mechatronics to Industrial Engineering and Management, Information Technology, and Mechanical Engineering. Also the interviewees' jobs vary, but they will be mentioned further on.

The interviewees were asked to indicate three items of given alternatives that they use their English skills most for at the moment: TV/movies, music, other hobbies, work, friends and other relationships, travelling, or other (question 10, appendix 2). Not surprisingly, everyone chose work. Five respondents chose travelling,

and three chose TV/movies. Hobbies, mainly reading, were also mentioned three times. The three youngest participants chose music. One interviewee also mentioned using English almost daily with friends. As it stands, all participants use English at work, and were, thus, asked to elaborate on what kind of situations require them to do so.

Jere a sales engineer, says he uses English daily at work. He adds that it does not necessarily include speaking every day but that he does write quite a lot whenever he is working. Jere also says it is mostly technical language and little small talk he gets to use. Various different situations take place by his “work desk in Finland”. When he is abroad it is most likely to be meetings, commercial negotiations, factory visits and such where his English skills are required. Approximately five times a year Jere either goes abroad with his own Finnish clients or receives foreign clients as visitors. In addition, his workplace has a Nordic organisation with which he travels abroad one or two times a year. Different fairs form yet another context where Jere uses English. He also points out that it is not uncommon to have for example an Indian designer in Finland, or that it is quite normal to go to a technical negotiation where the designer is for example Indian and the buyer is Swedish.

At the office Jere’ job is to make offers, which includes receiving specifications according to which he then makes the offers. Both the specifications and offers are done in English even though the customer is often Finnish. The Finnish customers themselves have projects implemented abroad, which makes it useless to change the language in between. Hence, all written material is in English even though the business partners more often than not speak Finnish with each other. After closing a deal, the forwarding, packaging etc. can be taken care of in Finnish, but the language changes back to English when visiting a site, since there are often workers, for example

assemblers, with foreign background. Jere adds that Nordic cooperation also reaches his domestic work assignments.

Simo travels a lot due to his work, as he is at the office for approximately one day every two weeks. Most of his travelling happens domestically, as he visits the company's 28 offices and approximately 50 salespeople. He uses English mostly in emails with other colleagues and suppliers abroad. Like Jere, he also mentions negotiations with suppliers and visitors with whom English is the medium of communication. Simo also adds that another firm, auditing his firm's operations, once sent a man who knew no Finnish to do the job. His company's working language was English and they had obviously assumed it would be so in Simo's workplace as well. Simo considers the situation a bit humoristic and says it would not be possible to change the working language into English in their company due to the lack of English skills. According to Simo the lack of English skills is affected by the fact that the average age of the workers is quite high. He further describes the specific situation with the foreign worker, where the company's quality manager was unable to communicate in English and had written the material in Finnish. The auditing worker had copied the text and used Google Translate to make sure they were talking about the same things.

Hannele, working for the same company as Jere and Simo, says much of her daily duties require technical English. The vocabulary vital to this job, however, is very different from what she was used to using in her previous job which had to do with ship technology and oil drilling among other things. "When I came here I had to learn a whole set of new terms related to valves and such," Hannele concludes.

She explains that their company has deliverers around Europe and elaborates that delivering a product, such as a valve, from for example Czech to Sweden can include all kinds of tasks and reporting that have to be done in English. Salespeople need to go through technical drawings and the process is done on the phone or via email.

Personally Hannele prefers email, because she considers it a safer choice, as you can always go back to the discussions and see what has been said. She thinks she can avoid misunderstandings by talking less on the phone with non-native English speakers.

Even though Tarmo is from a different company, and instead of sales works as the head of design, he still has a lot in common with the three previous interviewees. He, too, describes how it is usual to visit places abroad that are involved in projects. These visits entail meeting all the parties, clients, their consultants and the local designers. The site, where the project is to take place, is viewed and the parties have a meeting of about two to three days. In these negotiations the language is almost always English. Sometimes, rarely though, the language of the meeting can be some other language such as Russian or Polish, but in that case the local interpreter most often translates to English anyway. Tarmo also has to use English when handling matters related to foreign trade from Finland. Staying in contact with foreign parties is mostly done via email, and these emails comprise more than half of Tarmo's correspondence.

Alongside email correspondence Tarmo takes care of projects by visiting the sites approximately three times during the whole process. Naturally, the first visit takes place at the beginning of the project, whereas the second check needs to be done once the layout is ready. Before the assembly Tarmo can still visit the site in two later stages after which the responsibilities are passed onto the assembly team. They stay

abroad during the assembly and represent the company in the remaining meetings. Tarmo's first work trips are scheduled approximately three to four months apart from each other and the last visit is half a year from the beginning of the project.

Varpu, who worked as a manager of quality and data administration, seems to have used English as much as the interviewees working in sales and design. She feels the working situations requiring English have been variable. She explains how she was in charge of the IT of offices in Shanghai, Barbur and Büren, and therefore had to visit them to discuss their needs and level of satisfaction. She has also been in contact with foreign suppliers regarding some system updates. This has required her to monitor the update and search for equipment suppliers for example in Shanghai, because they had to be Chinese. At the same time, Varpu's company founded companies in Sweden and also closed down other companies, which demanded certain procedures with the authorities and suppliers to be implemented in English.

Another context where Varpu has been required to use English is the corporate group's strategy and selling days. She also adds that all negotiations regarding the selling of parts of the business to a German company have been in English. This has demanded business-negotiating skills, deciding how the trade will be carried out, moving the IT-solutions to the new premises and settling which parties play which roles in the process. Obviously all of this also has to be documented and reported. In addition, the more everyday tasks in the maintenance have included continuous discussions with the German, Chinese and Swedish and helping them solve IT related problems.

Erno, who continues to work as the head of design for the same company where Varpu used to work, appears to use English roughly the same amount as the

others. He, too, has to work with both domestic and foreign affairs, and thus writes and reads emails in English. Erno says he receives customers as guests in three different offices. Even though he is not actually working for sales, he participates in the so-called sales support by promoting the products abroad. Besides sales related matters, Erno also has projects that he runs in English. In addition, he takes part in the company's international events, where he may for example give presentations.

Jarmo, senior sales and project manager, also works for design, and uses English for various purposes in his job. He tells that using the language in design processes consists of writing and filling in documents, whereas project managing and sales require verbal communication as well. In his own opinion, Jarmo manages all his tasks.

Pertti, a mechanical design engineer needs English in his work in very similar ways: not only in writing and reading but also speaking and listening. To be more precise, Pertti has to present his technical drawings to the customers and answer their questions. Occasionally he also works as a supervisor. Both of these two tasks require him to travel abroad.

4.2 English competence

This chapter explains how the engineers describe their English skills as regards both understanding and production. They also share their assumptions on what they think others expect their English competence to be like.

4.2.1 Describing own English skills and other people's expectations

The participants were asked to describe and grade their English skills (question 2, appendix 2). The scale for the evaluation was chosen to be 4-10, since it is the common scale in Finnish obligatory education and high school and, therefore, common to everyone. The system includes three grades between every full grade, for example 8+, 8½ and 9-.

Altogether, the interviewees evaluated themselves quite positively. Many of them told that they get along fine with their English. Yet, most added that their language certainly is not "expert level", "guru" or "grammatically perfect", but rather "basic", "decent", "good", "satisfactory" or even "muddle-through-kind-of-English". The grades vary from 7 to 10-, with no visible relation to age. Both younger and older engineers evaluated themselves under and over 8, but neither of the women graded themselves higher than 8.

Not surprisingly, most of the interviewees describe differences between their production and comprehension. Only Simo thinks his skills are equally good in all areas. He elaborates this resulting from the fact that he has spent a year as an exchange student and that he has used English at work since 2009. One interesting exception is Pertti, in whose opinion spoken production is the easiest after reading comprehension. He justifies his view by saying that, when speaking, there are various different ways to describe one thing, and you can adjust your language according to the recipient. Without a doubt, many people would experience this as a challenging factor in spoken production, but Pertti's case seems to prove it is possible to feel comfortable in spoken communication after getting used to a certain kind of work language. Another exception

to the rule is Jere, who considers his listening comprehension notably better than reading comprehension. In addition, Tarmo points out that his listening comprehension is often affected by who is speaking. He considers his skills less adequate when listening to, for example, a Chinese or an American speaker. In fact, he says it is easier to communicate with non-native speakers who talk more slowly and do not have native accents. Erno brings up the same challenge, but with Indian speakers.

The participants were also asked to assume what kind of English other people expect from them (question 2, appendix 2). Jere and Simo, both sales managers think people expect them to be “quite fluent” or “completely fluent”. Simo adds that “everybody under 35 or 40, with relevant education and work experience, should be fluent”. Hannele states that as a sales engineer “you are expected to be able to speak because it’s a basic necessity”. She also notes that people expect less skills from older workers than from younger ones who are, as a matter of fact, expected to know several languages. Another assumption, described by Tarmo, is that for example a head of design manages without an interpreter in international communication. Erno, likewise a head of design, thinks people know to expect both technical and basic English skills. Similar issues rise from Jarmo’s answer. He says it is natural for people to assume that a project manager or sales engineer is capable of performing on their own, without constant need for assistance. Also Varpu, manager in data and quality administration, thinks others expect fluent mastering of English from people in her position.

Additionally, the interviewees described their assumptions on how they think their colleagues would describe their own English skills. In this case, the interviewees really had to ‘just assume’, because they had not discussed the subject with other engineers. Many assume their colleagues to be content with their skills, or, more

specifically, the fact that they get along with their English. Tarmo, for example, does not believe any of his co-workers aim for perfect performance. He explains that English is merely a medium that helps to get the job done. Tarmo guesses his colleagues would admit their English sounds like "rally English", a so-called accent heavily affected by the Finnish language. Varpu, on the other hand, says the ones who speak more English at their job, in other words, those who for example travel, are more likely to be happy with their skills.

4.2.2 Wishes and worries about English skills

The interviewees were also asked what kind of English skills they would like to have, and whether there is anything they are worried about considering their skills (question 3, appendix 2). In general, it seems that many would like to have broader skills, in other words, not to know only technical language but also be able to participate in small talk and have better oral skills.

Some of the interviewees also have mixed feelings about their skills. Jere, for example, feels he gets stuck with certain kind of expressions because his job entails mostly writing. Still, he is not worried about his skills, as he mainly communicates with other non-native speakers and feels he has nothing to be ashamed or afraid of. Likewise, many others appear to think they get along fine but would still like to be more fluent.

Talking, especially about other than work related matters and small talk, is experienced as difficult. Jere, Varpu and Tarmo highlight the importance of small talk. Varpu and Tarmo both describe how foreign partners often take you to dinners where

people expect you to talk about other than work-related matters. Therefore, they both mention the need to expand their vocabulary on to more everyday subjects.

Hannele expresses the same wish, and she even states she would rather have fluent English than know a few languages partially. She feels it is frustrating that if you do not speak some language fluently, the native side of the conversation, for example German, often turns the conversation into English. In those kinds of situations, she hopes her English would be perfect. Also Erno talks about wanting to be able to communicate effortlessly and spontaneously in all possible situations. He thinks his current feeling of not being able to throw himself into a "common level" conversation depends mostly on a need to have a broader active vocabulary. For him, the more technically centred communication is often something he has time to prepare for, so it seems he would like to get more practice on casual conversation.

Simo, again, makes an exception by being very content about his English, even though he describes it only as "quite rather OK". Still he says the only area somewhat challenging for him is the kind of English used for legal purposes. In his previous workplace he was in charge of contract legal transactions, so he knows the field requires special grammar and vocabulary. It appears that he considers his skills to be the kind for example Varpu would like to have. Even though she says she has managed with her English she expresses discontent with not being able to talk without being nervous. She would like to handle all possible situations so that she would feel her language would come out easily and naturally. However, when asked what worries her the most about her skills, she answers writing. The reason for this is that she feels her English is not technical or proficient enough. According to her, this is not a problem

when writing emails, for example, but starts to bother her when doing memorandums or instructions that need to be written correctly and specifically.

Pertti and Jarmo, who do not seem to regard their skills as very high, are, however, of the opinion that “getting along” with their English is enough. In fact, Jarmo says at his age, 54, he no longer demands himself to improve his skills.

4.2.3 Comparing English skills to those of other people

The discussion about the participants’ English skills also included comparing the skills to those of other people (question 4, appendix 2). Many of the participants compared themselves to their colleagues, and five of them clearly state they think they are approximately on the same level with their colleagues. Jere, however, thinks his English is amongst the best in his company. He further elaborates that usually the ”basic salespeople” have worse skills than their superiors. Hannele points out that also age and exchange student experience affect peoples’ English skills.

All in all, a kind of a group mentality seems to arise from this discussion, especially when it comes to Tarmo’s and Pertti’s comments. Tarmo says all his co-workers have a Finnish accent, and that it is no-one’s goal to even learn to sound like a native speaker. He admits he does not know whether it is the shared working environment or something else that causes everyone to act similarly, but he experiences the atmosphere as something that permits everyone to express themselves without pretending. Pertti seems to have a similar opinion, though he states it more bluntly as everyone having ”stiff English”. He still thinks his and his colleagues’ level of English is above the average Finnish person.

4.3 Attitudes and experiences

The interview also included questions concerning the interviewees' attitudes on different varieties of English, the relevance of grammatical correctness, the relationship between work and English, and communicating with native and non-native people.

4.3.1 Keeping to a specific variety of English

The participants were asked whether they keep to a certain variety of English in their own use of the language (question 7, appendix 2). The majority do not seem to feel a native accent would be an asset worth striving towards.

On one hand, Jere says he tries "to avoid rally English" because it can cause misunderstandings, but that his speech turns to that "pretty easily". Nevertheless, he continues to say that he guesses he sounds more American than British, a fact heavily influenced by the TV. Simo, too says he speaks very differently in Finnish and in English. On the other hand, Hannele tells she merely tries to speak as slowly and understandably as possible. When talking on the phone she even tries to make the other person talk more clearly by being "eeeextra sloooow" herself. By focusing on being clear she says she avoids many mistakes that could later backfire. Tarmo has a slightly different approach, as he notes that when talking to non-native speakers "it's not that serious if you don't find the right word, because you can paraphrase the expression with another one and explain the issue in a more complicated manner".

Varpu, Erno, Jarmo and Pertti all talk about how it does not make any difference what kind of an accent one has. According to Varpu, though, it would be

more important to have fluency in talking and writing. Erno talks for his whole working community by saying that they all have Finnish accents, because there is no-one with foreign practice who would, therefore, speak with a native accent. He says that even if it were possible, he would have no reason to talk with a different accent.

Actually Erno seems to have quite strong opinions on the matter, because he elaborates by saying he has no reasons "to admire some East London slur or Liverpool thingies". He also talks about an incident where the company had Irish visitors and they had to really strain their ears to understand their talk. That is why Erno aims at "basic normal English or -- like standard language". Jarmo clearly shares Erno's view, since he says "it doesn't work if you try to be an American cause at some point it goes over-the-top" if you have non-native clients like he does. Pertti labels non-native people speaking in native accents as imitators, and says he does not even know whether there are as many Finns who would have learned English the way some of them have learned Swedish "the Swedish way", meaning the Standard Swedish accent instead of the Finland Swedish one.

Again, the interviewees were encouraged to make assumptions about their colleagues' attitudes. Some rather contradictory comments were made by Jere, Simo and Varpu. Jere thinks there might well be colleagues who "try to be more British" and some others who try to be "more American". According to Simo, however, those who are more fluent tend to have an American accent. He says the amount of American English heard on the TV causes people to use colloquial expressions even when writing. In fact, Simo notes he does not know any Finn with a British accent, but thinks instead that the Finnish way of speaking English is "quite soft". Nevertheless, Varpu's view on the issue is that those who speak with some other than Finnish accent are actually trying

to brag about their language skills. She says those who are "more unpretentious" think their skills are enough and they "do not have to prove anything". In other words, they can be satisfied with their Finnish accent, for example.

4.3.2 The relevance of grammatical correctness and its relation to confidence

The interviewees were asked to choose what they think is more important when communicating in English: being grammatically correct or getting your message across (question 5, appendix 2). All eight were of the opinion that getting the message across is more significant. The justifications were not surprising, since it seems logical to state that the most important thing is to "get the job done" or "a project running".

Simo, Pertti and Varpu all feel there is less pressure to talk perfectly because the other party seldom has perfect English. Simo tells he encounters suppliers weekly, and says not one of them knows English better than Finns. As examples he mentions Italian, French and Spanish people, and claims that Finns have very understandable English compared to them. He says Finnish people are more grammatically correct but that their bigger problem is probably feeling nervous about speaking correctly. According to Pertti, being grammatically correct does not play any role because the opposite side does not know grammar either. Varpu, too, mentions the other side of the table not always speaking so correctly. She also says she felt less nervous about speaking correctly after having noticed people understood her.

Tarmo points out that speaking correctly is not more important than getting deals done and making projects proceed. He says "You don't get style points from it -- we're not professional performers". In the light of this argument, Jarmo's

words seem very logical "if someone has something important to say, engineers focus rather on the message than listen to grammatical nuances".

Jere and Erno also share the opinion that successful communication overshadows the significance of grammar. Erno remarks that "exchanging information is the corner stone of doing business and teamwork" and, therefore, engineers must not reduce the amount of communication even if they cannot do it on a high level.

Nonetheless, both men also talk about some grammatical errors causing problems and requiring extra caution. Erno says every few weeks he receives an email whose meaning he needs to check by asking its writer to define it better. "You can't be afraid to ask, otherwise the communication won't succeed," he continues. Jere has observed that small errors can actually grow into larger ones when they relate to technology. This is understandable when talking about technical English which needs to be accurate. He says he would rather communicate his message with less fluency, e.g. with a wrong tone and pay extra attention to getting the technical details right than care about offending the recipient.

The interviewees were, however, also asked whether they feel uneasy expressing their thoughts in English if they are not sure of the grammatical correctness of what they want to say (question 6, appendix 2). Even though everyone said being grammatically correct is less important than getting your message across, the majority feel embarrassed when committing errors. Hannele describes how she sometimes blushes when she realises she has said something wrong, and she assumes all people experience some kind of embarrassment in these situations. According to her, it is always the same when meeting a new person, but the unease ceases when you talk to the same person again. She also believes age and experience bring confidence.

Tarmo does not get embarrassed by his grammatical errors but says he probably feels the most uneasy if he, especially talking to a native speaker, has to ask them to repeat what they said. He, too, thinks experience makes you feel less unease. He portrays a situation at his previous workplace, where some worker had to answer the phone and got really upset about having to speak English. This employee had made a big deal out of the fact that he/she was not prepared and that he/she never wanted to answer the phone if he/she could not use Finnish. Tarmo cannot help but laugh a bit, as it is often virtually impossible to avoid English if you want to get the job done. According to Tarmo it is exactly this necessity that helps to forget stressing about using English. In other words, when you know you must finish off something, you do not have the time to worry about your fluency.

There might be exceptions, though. Pertti, for example, is very experienced, but admits he feels uneasy and starts excusing himself if he is unsure about what he says. Jere says people can certainly feel uneasy when they make errors. He says it is also embarrassing if you forget a technical keyword and are, therefore, unable to explain what you are supposed to explain. All the same, Jere does not believe this is a problem for the ones listening to him, as everyone faces similar situations. Erno, for his part, seems to try to avoid these kinds of challenges by thinking on beforehand what he is going to say, and prepares it in his head with at least a few key words.

As far as Jarmo is concerned, there is no reason to feel pressure. To his knowledge, many engineers aim at perfection and are unable to say anything when they cannot reach it. However, he also says a lot of engineers are the opposite, and that these people focus more on the message than its transmission. Jarmo praises the fact that they can "throw work buddies into the fire" by which he means situations where you simply

must use English. He sees the multiple different situations as a factor that reduces discomfort. Pertti has a different experience from this kind of support from the work community. He supposes everyone gets a little uneasy like he himself, but explains how you can ask for support in Finnish “if you happen to have a buddy there”. Like Jarmo, Simo does not feel uneasy either but he says he understands if those who clearly lack skills feel nervous. He describes his experience from several job interviews where he has seen how difficult and suspenseful it can be for some engineers to start talking in English.

It seems a bit peculiar that so many feel stressed about their grammatical errors even though everyone thinks all the other people consider communicativeness more important. It might well make sense what Varpu has noticed, namely that once self-critical engineers immerse themselves in a challenging conversation, they may forget their level of the language. In other words, they are too busy trying to think of ways to paraphrase difficult expressions to focus on their level of grammatical correctness. It is equally interesting that Erno reckons some engineers feel uneasy if they are uncertain about correct pronunciation, hyphenation or intonation. “If possible, I say the words the way they’re supposed to or else it’ll bother me,” Erno tells.

When discussing the level of English at his company, he describes how his colleagues probably experience their skills. He thinks many use jargon and do not actually care what others think they sound like. In his view, these engineers “throw themselves openly into the situation, which is always a good thing because it kicks off the conversation”. In these cases, according to Erno, it is crucial that they do not feel ashamed even if their grammar would be erroneous. He says working at an international

company, and communicating with Chinese, Spanish and German people, has offered many chances to observe “funny linguistic errors”.

4.3.3 Feelings about using English at work

The interview also included a discussion on what it feels like to use English at work (question 11, appendix 2). Despite many of the interviewees describing nervousness about their skills, all of them seem to consider it an advantage to use English daily. “It feels quite normal already,” says Jere, and continues explaining how it was a shock at first when he started to work for a Finnish wholesaler five years ago, and realised he had to use English every day. Now, however, he considers it “an absolute plus” that he “gets to talk all the time so it won’t get forgotten”. Jere also assumes that everyone who has to use English at work is interested in it. He thinks everyone likes to talk English because otherwise the skills deteriorate.

Hannele’s description is quite similar to that of Jere. “It’s not strange anymore like it was at the beginning, it could even frighten me, making phone calls and so it’s quite a natural part of our daily routines,” Hannele depicts. She admits it is sometimes very challenging to figure out difficult issues in English, because it might be the case that she does not even understand them in Finnish. All in all, the three youngest interviewees seem to have quite similar attitudes towards using English at work, as also Simo says it is “quite rather ok”. In Hannele’s words, all of them seem to realize that it is “not that kind of everyday English you use when you go grocery shopping, instead it’s rather specific so you have to know what you’re talking about”. Simo says there are engineers who have no enthusiasm to orientate themselves towards a job where they

would need English a lot, and, thus, their skills will not develop. The significance of age comes up again in this discussion when Simo says it is clear that older people with little practice have a more negative attitude towards using the language. In addition, he says those who have been exchange students or have other experience of using English usually have a positive approach to it.

As for the older engineers, their comments appear to support what the younger ones predict: that age and experience make it more comfortable to use English at work. The way Varpu puts it, once you get into a situation where you have to speak English, "you stop thinking and just get through it the best you can". This, in its turn, will make you able to realize ways to paraphrase thoughts you do not know the exact words to. Erno and Jarmo both think using English feels "quite good" and that using the language is the only way to gain confidence about it. Pertti, too, says with age it does not take as much effort to speak as it used to. He estimates that 80% of their workers do not try to avoid answering foreign phone calls. Erno guesses some colleagues might still consider it problematic that they have to use English in their daily communication, as they might feel it is difficult to even write emails. However, Erno himself writes them with pleasure and even on behalf of others. His overall opinion on the work community's skills seems to be that they are neither the best nor the worst possible. "This is what we've got," he states with a firm tone which appears to profess that 'it is what it is' and nothing can be done to improve the situation.

Tarmo does not consider it a negative thing per se to use English at work, but he gives a laugh and reveals his criticism towards the language, or rather its native speakers. Subtly, he despises those who cannot speak any second languages. He says "it's not a nice thing to say but" he feels that if someone doesn't know anything but

English, he/she is missing something. Tarmo seems to think knowing English is, in fact, nothing special because "it's a language that everybody speaks". One might detect that English is, nevertheless, quite important in Tarmo's work community because he has not dared to share his opinion with any of his colleagues. The importance of group feeling, being in the same boat with others, when it comes to using English, is also present in Tarmo's comments. He tells about a trip he made to South-Africa with a salesperson and the head of design of electronic engineering. After the first day they had asked each other how well they had understood the natives and they had agreed that their accent was incomprehensible at first. It was a relief for Tarmo that the others, even those with great skills, had had the same problem. Sharing these feelings made Tarmo realize quicker that understanding "the extraordinary melody" was simply going to take some getting used to.

To conclude, Varpu's observations sum up the issue quite well. She thinks using English at work is rarely a problem, because it is part of the modern world. "English is everywhere cause it's on the TV and on the radio and in the mailbox and email and everywhere," Varpu lists. She says having the chance to use the language is an advantage, because "we need and our working life requires it, we are world citizens here in Finland as well". She explains that her company's main markets are outside Finland, which made her realise a long time ago that few can make it by only focusing on the Finnish market.

4.3.4 Using English more with native or non-native people

As regards the contexts for using English, the interviewees were also asked whether they use the language more with native or non-native speakers (question 12, appendix

2). Without hesitation, everyone told they mostly communicate with non-natives. It is noteworthy that already one job, for example Jere's, can require speaking English with Estonian, Russian, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Austrian, Spanish, Italian, and German people. These non-native English users have, according to Jere, different kinds of skills in English. In his experience the Swedes, Norwegians and Danish know English "quite well", but "when you move to the rest of Europe you notice that some people can speak and others can't". Out of the nationalities Jere has worked with, he says outside Scandinavia, with the exception of Germany, it is more common to encounter people who use an interpreter or the help of a colleague because they know very little English.

Simo says he no doubt uses English more with non-native speakers even though some of his contacts are English, too. He does not think it makes any difference which ones he talks to. "Of course the natives speak a lot better," he states, yet arguing that the natives who visit companies in Finland probably are used to meeting all kinds of speakers and may not, hence, have any expectations. Additionally, Simo seems to have positive experiences of non-native speakers. He mentions for example meeting with a Dutch whose English he could not separate from that of a native speaker. When asked whether his language use is somehow different with native or non-native speakers, Simo uses this Dutch as an example to prove being non-native does not make any difference. Could it be that this attitude or experience is affected by Simo's good level of English and that he would, therefore, meet ELF speakers who are on a higher level as well? That is, it might be that he meets people from the same professional level and, thus, with better language skills.

Tarmo's view on non-native English is rather different from Simo's praises. It is not that he would dislike it, quite the opposite actually, but he still calls it

“bad English”. He says it is easier for him to understand than native English and, hence, he prefers to work with non-native speakers. This easiness, according to Tarmo’s view, stems from the simplicity of ELF. However, he seems to think that the simplicity does not necessarily mean that ELF would be simple language per se but that it is easier for him to understand. This seems to be the case because he makes a distinction between comprehensible German ELF, and incomprehensible Scottish and fast American speech, and claims “if I speak English with a German for example, he/she speaks it much more meticulously than for instance some Scot”. He does not, nevertheless, consider all ELF good language, as he mentions the ‘bad’ ELF sometimes spoken by some Chinese. Also Erno mentions having challenges when communicating with the Chinese, who he compares to Finns because their language seems to be “as far apart from English than Finnish”. In addition, his opinion on the Germans’ level of English resembles that of Tarmo’s. Erno assumes their company’s German owners speak better English than Finns due to “some linguistic background” that aids the Germans in understanding and learning English easier than “our language group”.

Varpu, too, says Chinese English is “awfully unclear and overall bad”. However, her opinion on the Germans is divergent, as she thinks most Germans speak bad English, or at least worse than Finns. Yet, she considers all ELF accents easier than native ones, because she states it is probably easier to talk to them due to ELF speakers “not having an accent”. It is interesting that Varpu should think so, as it implies that she does not consider the “bad English” an actual accent. Other interviewees also comment on ELF being more comprehensible than native English. Erno’s comments about the issue are a combination of several interviewees’ opinions.

Many times non-native speakers can perform sort of a more neutral version because of their pronunciation so at the end they can actually produce clearer and better understandable oral communication than the native speaker who, poor fellow, of course doesn't always necessarily understand he is speaking his own dialect and maybe even emphasizes a bit cause he's proud to be a Texas guy.

Erno also mentions that natives might use too complicated and difficult words. Other problems related to native speech seem to be accents, dialects and talking speed. "They don't remember it's not everybody's native language," says Hannele as well, but adds that she speaks "fortunately more with those who are in the same situation" as her.

Varpu has a different experience on this, for she says natives usually help if they notice the other person has a poorer level of English. Both Hannele and Varpu, like many others, feel more nervous when talking to a native speaker, which probably affects their communication.

According to Hannele, age affects communicating with non-natives even more, since younger people have studied the language more. She also wonders whether foreigners in general have more courage to use English, because she feels Finns might be a bit reserved when it comes to expressing themselves in any other language than Finnish. Jere, for example, speaks about not daring to "tell the whole story" to a native speaker, whereas with ELF speakers he feels he does not have to think about his sayings enough to feel embarrassed about their correctness. He does not see this only as a positive effect, but says one's own language competence may weaken when one uses the language with lower level speakers.

Varpu thinks people in working life have understood her and she has understood the others well, especially when it comes to ELF speakers. She hurries to

add that she has not had problems with native speakers either, though she has only spoken to them while on a holiday abroad. According to Jarmo, too, there is a difference in speaking to natives and ELF speakers. Jarmo thinks foreigners understand him well enough, and claims Finns might have better success at learning English because they cannot speak Finnish anywhere else than Finland. “Spain and Germany they do have their own strong languages, they don’t necessarily like to speak English and they haven’t studied it that way so you can see that the language competence is weaker there,” claims Jarmo. As far as he can see, he has done well with natives, too. The only ones causing him some trouble are “Indian-based and such shrill-voiced accents”. Erno does not believe non-nativeness to be a general cause for incomprehensibility. He comments on the Indians making an exception to the rule, but unconsciously ends up confirming his claim. That is, not realising he is actually talking about a country with a special relationship to English, he unintentionally criticizes an outer circle variety. For as a matter of fact, Indian English, part of the earlier phase of the spread of English, can actually be seen as a near-native variety, spoken as a second language by many (Kachru 1982, 1985).

Despite the differences in native and ELF speech, the interviewees say their own way of speaking does not change depending on whom they talk to. Jarmo, for example, notes that he speaks with the same accent, but if he notices the recipient does not comprehend, he might talk a little slower, stress more words and even repeat some of them.

4.3.5 The effect of working life on feelings about using English and belief in the development of English skills

The discussion about the feelings related to using English also included the questions “Has working life changed your views and feelings about using English? How? Do you believe your English skills will keep on developing?” (question 14, appendix 2).

Generally, the interviewees seem to think working in English has made them realize what an important language it is. Simo is the only one who says things are the way he had expected them to be. As for Hannele, she had also known long before that English is worth studying, but it was not until working life she noticed it is basically the only foreign language she needs. She admits this view might be constricted by her short career but says anyway that “it doesn’t matter if you can speak a bit of other languages as well – they’re like nice to use for greetings and such when you’re abroad – but otherwise it’s always English you use”. Hannele argues that all conferences, fairs et cetera are always organized in English because everyone is expected to know “the common global language”.

Tarmo’s career is already longer and his comments reveal his relationship with English has become more relaxed. Since he has noticed he needs the language mainly to communicate with ELF speakers, his attitude has changed and he does not feel embarrassed about his English anymore. Erno, whose career is even longer, is of the opinion that his English skills have really started to develop in working life and thanks to his own efforts at home. He says you must seek into situations and hobbies or other contexts where it is possible, through practice, to take your oral or written skills to the next level. He is mostly interested in improving his spoken skills and listening comprehension, but does not think his job will provide him enough opportunities to do

that. Erno's experience and opinions on learning English will be further enlightened in chapter 4.4.

Most of the interviewees believe their skills will keep on developing. They do, however think notable advance would require active learning. Jere says "you would probably have to go and take some lessons or go somewhere or somehow develop it cause I don't believe it'll improve any more in the same job". Although his work includes various ways of using the language, it seems reasonable to suggest that there is a finite amount of skills and language you can learn from one assignment. On one hand, if your working days consist mostly of writing the same type of emails and making the same kind of phone calls, you are probably likely to rely on a limited set of expressions and words you have already learned. On the other hand, Hannele is certain that using English daily in the same job for several years will make her more confident about her English and, thus, better at it. She says she still forgets basic words and that her speaking is "not that fluent". One possible interpretation could be that Hannele's ambitions are not as high as Jere's, since she, unlike Jere, believes the language usage provided by their working context will be sufficient to keep her skills developing.

Pertti and Simo, however, do not believe their skills will keep on developing. "If anything, the direction is downwards," says Simo, further explaining that he used to speak English daily in his previous job, and that he now does not get to do it every day. His attitude seems to be affected by the fact that he does not consider there to be anything else he should learn for this job in particular. Pertti admits he learns new things all the time, but he thinks he also forgets as much, so his level will stay more or less the same. His assumption seems justifiable, since he says he does not systematically aim at developing his English. Pertti is not happy with his skills, but does

not spend time improving them because he sees English merely as one tool he uses for his work.

4.3.6 Discussing language skills and situations regarding language use with colleagues

The participants were asked whether they, together with their colleagues, discuss their English skills and situations related to using them (question 15, appendix 2). The general tendency appears to be that English, being merely a tool for the job, is a “factor at the background” of the work places. It is also evident that people at the same work place have different experiences, which shows that some people like to discuss the subject more. Subordinates, for example, seem to talk amongst themselves and not to their superiors. Therefore, Simo says “we don’t really talk about that”, while Jere and Hannele, his subordinates, describe different kinds of topics they discuss.

According to Jere, the discussion is “more about how to approach certain clients, how you perform with your language skills” and “not necessarily about someone being bad or good or how you yourself speak”. He says it would be difficult to go tell a colleague something in their English is bad or wrong. Hannele tells they help each other with difficult expressions and words, and that they laugh convivially together at their “terrible rally English”. “So I don’t have to feel nervous even though I know everybody can hear me talking on the phone,” Hannele adds. The only thing Simo mentions is when receiving visitors some of their staff might feel timid about their English and, hence, ask him to take care of their part as well.

The more experienced engineers also give mixed answers. Tarmo says in his company they do not speak about using English, because “the language is more at the background”. Varpu says there have been many times she or someone else has commented on their own level of English. “Then you often get to hear you actually speak quite well,” she notes. Apart from this mutual encouragement, Varpu does not recall any more profound conversations on the use of English. The relation of Erno’s description and his subordinates seems a bit similar to that of Simo and his subordinates. Erno, too, says they “don’t really talk about it”, but, according to Jarmo, it is common for them to help each other with difficult terminology, for example. Pertti, however, does not think they discuss the topic. It, therefore, seems that either the question was problematically phrased, or different people consider different matters to be linked with the topic. Some consider pondering on terminology talking about using English and others do not.

People can also experience English related discussions differently. Erno, for example, considers it a very delicate subject. He says that is why they do not interfere in each other’s language use, not even in a supportive way. In Erno’s opinion the risk for misunderstandings and hurting other’s feelings would be too big. He thinks even friendly advice might be interpreted as unsympathetic. Therefore, no one needs to be afraid of getting commented on their language and everyone knows they can feel free to speak as they like and are able to.

4.4 English language teaching and learning

This chapter looks into the interviewees' thoughts on ELT, both on a general and personal level. In addition to commenting on the education system, the engineers also tell where and how they have learned English.

4.4.1 Skills enabled by ELT, ELT experiences and suggestions for the focus of it

The interview included a section on ELT (questions 8 and 9, appendix 2), where the interviewees were asked what kind of English skills they think English teaching in schools enables. They also told what ELT was like when they studied English, and gave their opinions on what ELT should focus on. Naturally, the experiences vary a lot according to the engineers' age and personality. Some similarities can, nevertheless, be found. First of all, the overall opinion on the ELT provided by the Finnish education system seems to be that it has its flaws, but that it has improved through the years. Secondly, especially the upper secondary school is considered as the basis for English competence. Thirdly, all suggestions for improvement relate to increasing the amount of oral practice.

Jere says it probably depends on the person that others learn languages younger because they are more interested in studying in general. He thinks comprehensive school gave him some kind of a basis that he did not realize until it all fell into place at the university of applied sciences. Jere feels the difference then was not only older age, but also finding his own field and noticing he really needed the language with exchange students, on trips abroad and so on. During comprehensive school he had not needed to actually use English. Tarmo's outlook on the topic is that upper secondary

school provides a base for useful basic language, while language related to special fields is learned while studying the field or in working life.

Simo points out the level of English provided by ELT presumably depends a lot on the area. He says this out of experience, for he grew up on the countryside. “What kind of a home background you have also affects how well you learn at school,” he claims and continues on to say that people probably learn inevitably better in multicultural communities like Vantaa, for example. In less populated places, Simo guesses, “the attitudes of the whole group can be a little negative so even if the teaching is fine the language does not gain ground”. Also Varpu feels that people’s own attitudes affect the learning outcome. She says that with the right kind of attitude you get more out of ELT, and combined with using the language and exposing yourself to it via TV, for example, you can reach a good elementary level from lower education. The right kind of attitude, however, would have required motivation created by the realization that you are actually going to need the language in real life.

For all Hannele knows, ELT still focuses too much on grammar, which might make studying English repellent for some people. “It would be so much more important to invest in real life situations,” she stresses. She would like to see even less sitting in the classroom and listening to the teacher, because “the most important thing is to know how to communicate”. Hannele remembers that they had some oral exercises when she went to school, but says they felt embarrassing because they did not do enough of them and, thus, it did not feel natural to speak in English. Varpu, too, says ELT should focus on oral production. However, she also adds comprehension and written production to the list. She emphasizes that grammar should function as a by-product, because “it’s important but not the main point”. In her opinion, the emphasis of

ELT should be more interactive, even against the students' will. They should have to produce more language, oral and written.

Erno's experience and opinions are quite similar to Varpu's. He, too, says by being an active student you can gain a theoretical basis for the language at school, but claims that at the end the school has limited possibilities for training spoken language in spontaneous situations. He says working life demands producing language "out of thin air", which requires courage. Therefore, Erno underlines the importance of encouraging students. Practical language skills benefit from a large active vocabulary, and Erno claims this is only gained through practice. However, he points out that with enough courage, many people can actually communicate with quite a limited vocabulary. He has witnessed two extremities, the ones who have excellent skills but are too afraid to open their mouth, and the ones who have enough courage to manage without thinking what others might think about their poorer skills.

Many of the more experienced interviewees seem to be aware of the fact that ELT has changed after they were students. In addition, Jarmo points out that nowadays the difference is also in the amount of exposure to English. Today people, for example, travel more, use the Internet, and play games, which all adds to learning English.

4.4.2 Comments on the higher education ELT and contexts for gaining English skills

The discussion on ELT continued with the question of whether the English instruction at a higher level provides students with good abilities to use the language independently

in life after school. The interviewees were also asked to tell where and how they have gained their current English skills. The common opinion seemed to be that the worst lack in the ELT at universities and universities of applied sciences is that there is not enough of it. Additionally, as with lower education, the respondents demand more oral exercise.

Some people have also positive feedback on the matter. Jere, for example, says in reality he started learning English at the university of applied sciences, after he there began to grasp the theory of his mother tongue. Learning Finnish grammar made it easier for him to understand the grammar of English, too. Hannele, only a few years older than Jere, has a rather different experience. She says of course the English courses at university level maintain skills but she feels she has only learned to use English in working life and on her free time. Hannele has improved her skills by watching TV series without subtitles, reading books, listening to music and checking up on song lyrics. According to her, it is “quite self-directed” how her English competence has developed. In comparison, Jere is of the opinion that had he only learned English from movies and things alike, it would be “a bit dull”. He says he did not learned much in comprehensive school, and neither in vocational school, where the amount of English seemed truly small to him. Jere, therefore, considers the role of ELT at the university of applied sciences important.

Nonetheless, Jere overrules his argument rather harshly by stating he has not actually benefited much from learning grammar during his last studies. “At the end you don’t need it anywhere, when you speak the language daily it all comes from your head,” he claims and, moreover, estimates that he has learned 50 % of his vocabulary from movies. The problems Jere sees with the university level ELT is its minor role in

the studies, and that the emphasis is not enough on oral skills. He thinks there should be more "talking and talking and talking" and that the atmosphere could even be very strict about not using Finnish in the classroom. Additionally, he wonders whether ELT could make more use of movies, since he has learned so much from them.

Simo, too, has his critiques on the ELT provided by the university level education. In his opinion, it does not provide good abilities to use the language independently outside the classroom, but questions the amount it even should provide. He points out that for example engineers in some engineering workshops do not need as much English as others. This might be true for the smaller ones that only work domestically. Simo assumes the regional differences between schools and personal differences between people play a big role in developing good English skills. He seems to imply you can actually never blame ELT for not learning, because if you really wanted to learn, you could learn anything. As for his own experience, Simo describes the courses as "rather easy" and wonders how students can be expected to learn from online courses in the first place. He appears to imply that people have a tendency to ease their workload when possible, and with online courses it is easier to cheat by, for example, letting others do your work. He is sceptical about how much online courses can actually "refine language skills". Simo states his skills developed when he was an exchange student and had to speak English. Working life, in its turn, has made him more efficient, in that he writes emails faster, among other things.

The more experienced engineers seem to have similar experiences. Tarmo says his current English skills are formed by upper secondary school ELT and working life. The first one provided him with basic knowledge of the language, and the second one with field-specific knowledge. Tarmo says he has learned words and expressions,

not used in daily language, thanks to the amount of repetition provided by his work. Varpu's story is quite similar. "Surely the basis from school but now when you really start to need it at work the motivation to learn the language changes totally," she describes. After gaining motivation she has learned "by reading and doing". In other words, Varpu started learning once she really felt she had to. She spoke English because her job depended on it, and this "must" also led her to study voluntarily. Working life made English interesting to Varpu, but she realized she needed help learning it. She, therefore, took some courses and went to a discussion group to practise her skills.

Why does Varpu not include her higher-level studies in the list of contexts for learning English? She says she did not get much out of it "simply because there was so little of it". That seems to be the reason for Erno's opinion as well. He, too, feels comprehensive and upper secondary school provided him basic abilities, and says the amount of language teaching in engineer education in his days was so small it gave him nothing. Comparing this to Jere's experience, it seems that at least something has changed. While Erno remembers they actually "just read a bit of terminology", Jere says the most useful thing was learning grammar. Hannele also talks about the amount of ELT in her studies, but says she benefited more from having all study materials in English at the university. Tarmo's topmost image of the ELT provided for future engineers matches the image created by the others' statements. "It was really nothing – few classes and then going through some vocabulary – but it sure didn't leave many memory traces," he argues, and supposes many would agree that upper secondary school forms the more important basis.

Erno professes that the ELT of lower level education and working life are more important than ELT provided by engineering studies. He says his level of English

is as it is thanks to working life, and the basis from school days. By basis he actually means mostly attitude. “If your attitude for some reason is such that you’re scared of or avoid it [English], you don’t necessarily seek those kinds of jobs or situations,” he explains about attitudes affecting our choice of career. If his right, none of the interviewees for this thesis can have had a very negative stance on English, not even in the past. This would partly explain why none of the respondents seem frustrated or bothered by the state of ELT for engineers, but they merely settle for stating its flaws quite neutrally. That is, if they had ever experienced learning English troublesome, they would probably not feel it was that tolerable to do it by themselves in working life. This attitude might have been an asset for Jarmo, too. He attended vocational school which at the time did not yet have any ELT. The teaching at the Institute of Technology was not helpful either, because the group was so heterogeneous it was challenging to make the course balanced for all students on different levels. Jarmo concludes his skills have mainly developed when travelling and thanks to his own enthusiasm.

The interviewees did not only point out flaws in the ELT for engineers, but they also made suggestions for improvement. According to Hannele, teaching English for engineers has different needs that are not entirely fulfilled at the moment. She says she knows many people hate conversation exercises but claims everyone needs more of them. “If people would have them all the time, talking would start to become more natural,” Hannele professes. As an example for preparing students for working life she mentions practicing phone calls and other spontaneous situations. Also Tarmo has an interesting view, for he contemplates making English a part of everything else in the engineers’ studies. He thinks it would be useful not to teach and learn it for the sake of it, but parts of other subjects could be carried out in English. This could match the

future needs of the engineers better, because in working life you are “simply expected to do your job in English when a situation requires it”. This cooperation has been implemented in some degree programmes, though integrating English into other subjects and vice versa could have even more potential and the amount of integration could be larger.

Tarmo also mentions practical skills useful for working life, and says ELT should provide engineers with negotiating skills. Like the other interviewees, Tarmo, emphasizes the role of oral practice because he thinks it is easier to learn to read and write alone than to learn to speak. When you read or write by yourself, he says, you can check on words and find information that makes it not so necessary to have a teacher with you. However, to practice talking, you need other people. Thus, Tarmo considers the most important mission of ELT to provide situations where you have to speak and discuss.

Varpu suggests something very similar, for, she says every lesson should have a part where “everybody would be forced to produce something”. According to her, there is not enough of this, mainly because the amount of English instruction is “so ridiculously small”. “The few times you actually went on the course have such a little significance in the end,” she claims. Varpu does not think there is anything particular wrong with the quality of the teaching, it is just that the subject does not have a large enough role in the studies. Varpu is thankful they had to give oral company presentations. It left a strong memory trace, since she says she still remembers “what a tuff situation it was to go at the front of the class and talk for 15-30 minutes” about your job and work place. Yet, she thinks students should be made to do this more often.

Jarmo, Pertti and Erno, too, emphasize the importance of spoken skills. Erno says your work assignment defines what kind of English skills you need, but that for many assignments it is a necessity to use “live language”, by which he means spoken English. Erno’s own job is a good example of this, for even though email is his daily communication tool, he also talks on the phone, receives visitors and gives presentations. Because of the major role of email communication, however, he says ELT should provide skills for both written and oral language. He does not only mention production, but also reading and listening comprehension. Jarmo demands “oral presentation skills” because, according to him, “you can learn the written part by reading and writing, and comprehension by listening or reading”. He hurries to add that many engineers need to know how to write reports, which makes also writing skills something to be covered in their English studies. In addition, he continues by reflecting his own skills, developed by working life, and says oral skills are important because “you learn special terms once you work in the field”. That is, learning vocabulary should not take a lot of time from oral practice. Pertti does not have personal experience from higher-level ELT, but he assumes building conversational skills is the most useful issue it could focus on.

4.5 Need for updating training

Lastly, the interviewees were enquired about their need for updating training. They were also asked whether they believe their employer supports or would support updating training when it comes to English. In summary, some of the older participants mention having experience from updating training. The interviewees’ needs vary but many

express some sort of a need. Nobody indicates that their employer would have a negative stance towards updating training. The two superiors say they encourage or would encourage others in this matter.

Hannele believes many would consider some extra training a positive chance. She and one of her colleagues have even talked about how good it would be to be able to practise conversation. Also Varpu guesses that “those who actually work have motivation” for updating training. She says there might of course be those who want to do things the easy way, but believes the majority have a positive attitude. “The biggest motivator is when you *really* have to do your job using the language,” Varpu states. It matters that you can be “free and relaxed” when talking to your colleagues, customers and suppliers, because, she says it also affects you stress level. Otherwise, “if you know you have some strategy meeting in a month, you’ll start counting the days like whoa 20 days and then,” she laughs.

Simo praises the system his previous work place had, for an outside firm arranged language groups where everyone could practise languages once a week. He says it worked truly well because the participants often had the same job and approximately similar linguistic challenges. Additionally, they might have known each other so well that no one really felt nervous. Tarmo has experience of this kind of activity, but answers “maybe” when asked whether he would take part in it again. His justification is that his need for updating training is probably minor in his current job than his previous one. His current job is rather social: he calls and writes people, visits them and they visit his work place. Hence, Tarmo feels he gets enough training from his job. He tells people in his previous work place liked participating in the training, because the job description was more about working on your own.

Speaking of working on your own, Erno thinks communications in general is a lonely business. He says the most difficult about improving your oral skills is that “you are all by yourself when producing speech and there the other guy is waiting and looking deep into your eyes like what’s the old man gonna say, when you’re thinking of a word, so that’s a nasty situation”. Thus, Erno concludes it would be easier to produce speech if your skills allowed you to speak without constantly stopping to think. It might be possible to assume that updating training would help engineers with these kinds of feelings by improving their skills and, better yet, building up a sense of communication being a shared context, and not something you work on alone.

5 Discussion

The analysis above concentrates on providing the findings of the survey, without much attempt to discuss them further. Therefore, this chapter includes more detailed descriptions on some of the findings and suggestions on how the results could be interpreted.

5.1 Interpretation of the analysis

As is probably clear from the above, the interviews produced rather a large amount of data. It was presented in quite detail in the previous chapter, so this section will focus on summing up and discussing the main findings. The first research question was how English is present in the working life of Finnish engineers. As expected, the findings indicate that English and especially ELF is very much present where Finnish engineers work. The fact that most of their English use is required for ELF communication does not seem to bother the participants, quite the opposite in fact. They feel it is easier to communicate with ELF speakers than native ones. This is partly due to ELF being experienced as a kind of a safety zone, where the feeling of being level with others is important, and partly due to finding less need to put effort into understanding ELF speakers than natives. Striving towards a native variety is often experienced either as pretentious or a privilege for those who have for example lived abroad.

On one hand, a finding worth mentioning is the way in which the participants describe their lack of English skills, yet justifying the satisfaction in their skills by stating they have learned enough to get their job done. On the other hand, the skills required to get the job done seem to have been acquired from working life. Even

the more recently graduated engineers criticize the ELT of their engineering studies for its small amount and lack of focus on communicative or speaking skills. The general opinion about improving ELT seems to be that more emphasis should be given to communication. The engineers appear to suggest that learning the field specific vocabulary takes place in working life naturally, and does not, therefore, need to be a priority for ELT.

Thirdly, even though all the interviewees think communicativeness is more important than grammatical correctness, almost all of them feel uneasy if they are not certain that they can produce correct language. In other words, even the more experienced engineers sometimes feel uneasy even though they say they do not feel as nervous as when they started working. Hannele feels Finns might be a bit reserved when it comes to expressing themselves in any other language than Finnish. If there is a hint of truth in this stereotype, it might be due to being so conscious of speaking correctly.

All in all, the core themes, or common experiences, related to the use of English in the work of these engineers seem to be learner autonomy, spoken communication, and interaction skills. Firstly, learner autonomy as a theme can be detected from how the engineers feel they have reached their current level of English mostly thanks to working life, where they have had to adapt and learn the language, experience by experience. After the basic skills provided by previous education the participants feel the ELT provided by their engineering education has not made much of a difference. Secondly, the importance of spoken communication is clearly emphasized by the interviewees. Even though much of their work involves writing, they seem to think it would be more useful for ELT to focus on speaking skills, since written language can be practiced more easily alone than speaking. Thirdly, interaction skills

arise from the interviewees' depictions about not being able to interact with spontaneity. They express a wish to have better skills for reacting spontaneously in spoken communication.

The findings of this study appear to be somewhat similar compared to Valtaranta's (2013:114) findings, according to which the core themes in the professional context of engineering include: learner autonomy, the significance of social interaction skills and face-to-face communication, the concept of intercultural understanding, and misrecognition of female gender in engineering. Except for the last one, all the themes occurred in some way in the data of this study, too. However, unlike Valtaranta's (2013:5) participants, the ones in this study did not depict a "conscious resistance to stereotypical thinking patterns", but rather, were quite outspoken in their comments on foreign accents for example. However, similar to Valtaranta's interviewees, mine also "resorted to humour as an alleviating element in situations of intercultural conflict", meaning that they, for example, joked about difficulties related to foreign accents (*ibid.*).

Altogether, the interviewed engineers appear to be content and ready to reflect upon their English skills. Even though many, in a way, laugh about "the Finnish rally English", no one seems to worry about not sounding like a native speaker. It is a bit contradictory that while referring to Finnish English as 'bad', some interviewees praise Finns for speaking good, understandable and clear English.

5.2 Comparison with engineering students' assumptions and opinions

In addition, this study aimed to find out how the assumptions and opinions of students differ from the experiences of engineers in working life or whether the professional experiences support students' thoughts. This chapter will approach the question by comparing the findings of the interviews to a questionnaire for engineering students (Mero 2013). Naturally, it is not deeply meaningful to compare a set of answers from 7 professionals to that from 86 students, but it may serve as an indication of the relation of the professionals' experiences and students' predictions.

Firstly, comparing the contexts for using English reveals similar tendencies in the students' and professionals' lives. The students use English most for TV/movies and studies, while the engineers use it mostly for work and travelling. In both cases music was the third most common context, although the professionals also chose TV/movies and hobbies the same amount of times. (Mero 2013:12) The future assumptions made by the students appear to be correct, seeing as they predict they would use English for work, travelling and TV/movies (Mero 2013:13). Hence, many of them seem to be aware of the fact that they are going to need English in working life. In addition, they also seem to be aware of the role of ELF, as a vast majority of the students, 88% (76), think they are more likely to need English with non-native speakers than native speakers. (Mero 2013:14) This, too, matches with what the professionals explained about using the language mostly with ELF speakers.

An interesting distinction, perhaps affected by the age difference or the amount of exposure to English, is that when inquired whether the students keep to a specific variety of English, 10% (9) of them answered American English, and 6% (5)

British English. None of the professionals admitted striving for a variety, and the same figure was 83% (71) among the students. (Mero 2013:14) Though the students' most popular choice, not trying to sound like a native, is explicit, it differs from the absoluteness of the professionals. The distribution, however, would most probably be different when interviewing more engineers.

In any case, the justifications for not striving for a native variety seem somewhat similar. Some students comment "Why should I?", "I speak a mixture, whichever feels comfortable", and "I try to speak as clear as possible" (my own translations). On one hand, a prevalent view seems to be that it is not important to keep to a specific variety of English. One student describes it as "pointless" and another "unnatural and forced". (Mero 2013:21) The engineers express the same attitude, since they declare the only thing that matters is "to get the job done", and not how your English sounds. They seem to say that there are many other ways of speaking efficiently than the native ways of speaking. On the other hand, some students seem to think the reason for not keeping to a variety is that their skills are not sufficient. One of them explains "My English skills are not good enough for me to be aware of what variety I speak". (ibid.) The professionals' talk of "rally English" might have something to do with a similar stance.

The students and professionals also have similar opinions when it comes to whether getting one's message across or being grammatically correct is more important in communicating in English. In this question all are very unanimous. Only 1% (1) of the students and none of the engineers think grammatical correctness is more important than intelligibility (Mero 2013:16). An interesting relation between the findings is that even though virtually everyone thinks getting your message through is

more important than grammatical correctness, 39% of the students and 5 out of 7 engineers feel uneasy about being grammatically incorrect (Mero 2013:17). Has not having to possess perfect or native English competence become some kind of a wasted refrain known by everyone, yet not actually internalized by all? It seems that not even professional experience can always calm people's minds when it comes to grammatical correctness. The future may, however, be brighter, as over a half of the students, 54% (46), told they do not feel uneasy about speaking according to grammar (ibid.).

Another similarity between the studies is that ELF accents are not experienced as difficult. The students were asked to take a stance on the statement "It is often difficult to understand non-native English speakers (e.g. on TV)". It seems that 78% (67) of the respondents consider ELF understandable, as they chose to disagree with the statement. Only 12% (10) of them think the opposite, while 10% (9) chose 'undecided'. (Mero 2013:17) The same result comes up in the interviews with the engineers. Even though some challenging ELF accents are mentioned, many of the professionals consider it easier to communicate with non-native speakers.

In addition, the students were asked whether the ELT at a University of Applied Sciences provides information on other varieties of English than British and American English. While as many as 36% (27) of the respondents answer that they have not been told about other varieties, only 5% (4) think other varieties have somehow been included in the teaching. It is noteworthy that over half of the informants, 59% (45), do not know if they have received information about other varieties. (Mero 2013:15) Judging from this perspective, teaching should focus on raising more awareness of the international role of English, ELF included.

The students were also asked whether they would prefer native or non-native speakers of English as visitors to their class, to practice English with them. As many as 48% (43) of the students do not think it makes a difference with whom they practice, and they chose 'Whichever'. Even though 34% (30) would prefer a native speaker, together with the 48%, the 18% (16) who would choose a non-native speaker, make up a notable support for ELF. (Mero 2013:22) Many students assured they "would learn something from both", native and non-native speakers. A valid point made by one student was that "the situation in the future is going to be the same, you cannot choose". Justifications for preferring non-native speakers were, for example, "You would hear English from other countries", "You would not be so nervous about making mistakes", and "Clear communication can be learned better with people who need the same kind of practice". (ibid.)

One noteworthy difference between the students and professionals concerns the abilities provided by the ELT offered to engineering students. Seeing that the professionals' opinions on and experiences of the subject are rather criticizing, it might be encouraging to see that 62% (53) of the students think "English instruction at a University of Applied Sciences provides students with good abilities to use the language independently in life after school". It is noteworthy that only 7% (6) of them disagree. Nonetheless, as many as 31% (26) do not appear to know what to think, as they chose 'Undecided'. (Mero 2013:19) Their amount is probably affected by the fact that some of them had only had one course of English during their studies. What does all this imply? One possible explanation could be that, generally speaking, people tend to take a positive view of what they have invested time and effort in. After receiving similar results, Ranta (2010:167) states, "they maintain that the school does its job well in what

it is supposed to do and teaches the kind of (normative) English it is supposed to teach – even if it does not always help in the ‘real world’ ”. This could be true for the students at Lahti University of Applied Sciences as well, since the younger professionals interviewed in this study had quite a few suggestions for improvement of ELT. At the time of recording the interviews, they had not been working for numerous years after graduating, so their experiences could not have been extremely out-dated.

In addition, this study aimed at discussing the possible need to include ELF in the ELT in Finnish engineering education. The hypothesis was that ELT should focus more on ELF, which seems to get support from the fact that both the professionals and the students express a need to communicate effectively with non-native speakers. In fact, the students at the Faculty of Technology at Lahti University of Applied Sciences would seem ready to welcome a change in ELT. They are aware of the increasing importance of ELF which, as a matter of fact, is supported by the engineers’ depictions of using English with other ELF speakers. This growing significance has not yet been regarded sufficiently in teaching. What can, therefore, also be concluded from these studies is that students’ and professionals’ awareness of the lingua franca role of English is not enough to change ELT. As Ranta (2010:175) states, the reason for this is that “the educational authorities’ and test planners’ perception of the language trails behind”.

6 Conclusions

This study endeavoured to enlighten the current state of professional English use by some Finnish engineers through their own portrayals: how and with whom they use the language and their feelings on using it. Since the inspiration for this thesis arises from the field of ELF studies and the increasing demand for acknowledging the altered ownership of English, the main research question was how English is present in the working life of the engineers chosen for this study. One of the aims of gathering information on the matter was to build up a basis for proving the need of including ELF in ELT. This goal was approached by comparing the opinions and assumptions of engineering students to the experiences of engineers in working life. That is, in my earlier study (Mero 2013) on the students' attitudes on ELF and the ELT they had received, I had come across the evident ELF-welcoming attitude of future engineers. Therefore, with the present research I aimed at testing whether the experiences and attitudes of current engineers support the same view.

Comparing the experiences of engineers, and what they consider requirements of working life, to the students' assumptions, lent support for the hypothesis: ELT should focus more on ELF. The hypothesis arose from my BA thesis (Mero 2013), but its claim is also supported by previous research (Riemer 2002:99). It should be noted that both the theses are small-scale studies, and, thus, extensive generalisations cannot be made based on them. However, Valtaranta's (2013) research, for example, reaches a more general level. Nonetheless, if my results are anything to go by, both engineering students and professionals show a need to communicate effectively with ELF speakers.

The need for effective ELF communication gives rise to the third research question: Is there a need to include ELF in the ELT in Finnish engineering education? Based on the findings, it seems justified to claim that, as concerns ELF, ELT does not quite meet the demands of working life. However, despite criticizing ELT for not preparing them for efficient spoken communication with foreigners, the engineers seem to have solved the challenge by themselves to some extent. At least they do not express a significant amount of worry as regards their English skills. They appear to be content over the fact that they manage to get along well enough with their English, but do, nonetheless, wish to communicate more effectively. Many of the less experienced ones express a positive attitude towards receiving updating training, and their comments imply that they would like to feel more confident about spoken communication.

Instead of merely work related technical matters, many of the engineers wish to learn everyday language and small talk. None of them think grammatical correctness would be more important than getting your message through. Yet, many comment on feeling more comfortable when talking to non-native speakers because of a sense of levelness that permits more errors than talking to natives. Some of the interviewees still feel uneasy when making errors. One might ask whether making people more aware of the large amount of ELF variation could encourage the feeling of it being acceptable not to sound like a native speaker.

Even though this research is based on the analysis of individual experience, studies like this can serve as background information for professionally oriented language education for preparing students towards their profession (Valtaranta 2013:17). According to Valtaranta (ibid.), “The goal in professionally oriented language education should not be an uncritical replication of existing professional contexts, however; but the students should be educated to become autonomous, critical and

creative members of a society”. It seems justified to claim that part of educating those kinds of autonomous English users would include making them aware of the current state of the language, and helping them prepare for the multinational communication they will face. Saville-Troike (2006:137) states that “even the most highly educated adult native speakers can never expect to have mastery of *all* the potential resources of a community’s language, and such an expectation for the vast majority of any L2 learners would be completely unrealistic”. Therefore, English teachers and learners alike should prioritize what needs to be learned, especially in contexts where the language is going to be used for a limited range of functions (ibid.). This, in its turn, is the essence of ELF ideology.

Considering the current situation with globalized markets, multicultural companies, the need to expand and cooperate internationally, it seems unlikely that a Finnish engineer could avoid using English at work. At some time, it might have been possible to think that certain job titles and qualifications led to careers with certain duties, ones where you needed languages and others where you perhaps needed them less. Nowadays, the distribution of tasks can be rather different in different companies, and one job in one company may involve using English for other purposes than the same job in another company. For example, heads of design might use English for differing situations and tasks.

Companies also transform their structures and practices, change owner and thus also require flexibility from engineers’ English skills. This ability is required when communicating with various kinds of English users, too. Valtaranta (2013:25) states that “while industrial society assigned education the significant objective of preparing people for predefined jobs, today people need to define the content and rules of their work on their own or in collaboration with others without strict guidelines”. Luckily, the

engineers in this study seem to respond well to ELF communication, which they appear to find easier and more efficient than communication with native speakers.

It would be a start to somehow even mention all the numerous varieties of ELF in ELT. After all, as McKay (2002, 1) states, “the teaching and learning of an international language must be based on an entirely different set of assumptions than the teaching and learning of any other second or foreign language”. As the future teachers of English as a second language become more aware of ELF, we may well see a change in ELT towards a more international English, represented by ELF.

It seems that the working life of Finnish engineers demands ELT to focus more on the global role of English. Future engineers could benefit from getting to know and being more aware of ELF accents when they enter working life. Hence, it would be advisable for ELT at university level to focus more on ELF. However, taking into consideration that the amount of ELT at university level is not substantial, the demand of ELF awareness needs to be taken into account already in earlier education. Every level of ELT has the responsibility of answering to the demands of the modern world. In Riemer’s (2002:99) words:

Language and communication skills are recognised as important elements in the education of the modern engineer, including English for specific purposes. Yet, there seems to be limited implementation of English courses globally, despite its current *lingua franca* status. Those institutions that have already implemented multilingual and communication elements will be at the forefront of providing the demands of industry and society.

References

- Arene online 2016 Available from <http://www.arene.fi/en>. [Accessed 7 August 2016]
- Arene. 2010. *Suositus tutkintojen kansallisen viitekehysten (NQF) ja tutkintojen yhteisten kompetenssien soveltamisesta ammattikorkeakouluissa*. [Internet] Available from <http://www.arene.fi/sites/default/files/PDF/2015/NQF.pdf>. [Accessed 7 August 2016]
- Björkman, Beyza 2008. *English as the Lingua Franca of Engineering: The Morphosyntax of Academic Speech Events*. *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 7, 3:103-122
- Breiteneder, Angelika 2009. *English as a lingua franca in Europe: an empirical perspective*. *World Englishes* 28, 2:256–269.
- Cogo, Alessia 2012. *English as a Lingua Franca: concepts, use, and implications*. *ELT Journal* 66, 1: 97-105.
- Graddol, David 2000. *The Future of English?* London: The English Company (UK) Ltd.
- Crystal, D. 2003. *English as a Global Language* (Second edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Groom, Chloe 2012. *Non-native attitudes towards teaching English as a lingua franca in Europe*. *English Today*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 50-57.
- Huhta, Marjatta 2010. *Language and Communication for Professional Purposes - Needs Analysis Methods in Industry and Business and their Yield to Stakeholders*. Academic dissertation University of Tampere.
- Jenkins, Jennifer 2000. *The Phonology of English as an International Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jenkins, Jennifer 2006. *Current Perspectives on Teaching World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca*. *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 40, Issue 1, 157-181.

Jenkins, Jennifer 2009. *English as a lingua franca: interpretations and attitudes*. World Englishes, Vol. 28, No. 2, 200–207.

Jenkins, Jennifer 2012. *English as a Lingua Franca from the classroom to the classroom*. *ELT Journal*. Vol. 66, Issue 4, 486-494.

Kachru, B. B. 1982. *The Other Tongue. English Across Cultures*. Urbana, Ill. University of Illinois Press.

Kachru, B. B. 1985 *Standards, codification, and sociolinguistic realism: The English language in the outer circle*. In: Quirk, R. and H. Widdowson, (eds.) *English in the World: Teaching and Learning the language and the literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kuo, I-Chun 2006. *Addressing the issue of teaching English as a lingua franca*. *ELT Journal*, Vol. 60, Issue 3, 213-221.

Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. 2009. *InterViews. Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Leppänen, Sirpa and Tarja Nikula 2007. *Diverse Uses of English in Finnish Society: Discourse-Pragmatic Insights into Media, Educational and Business Contexts*. *Multilingua* 26.4: 333-380. *Communication & Mass Media Complete*.

Leppänen Sirpa, Anne Pitkänen-Huhta, Tarja Nikula, Samu Kytölä, Timo Törmäkangas, Kari Nissinen, Leila Kääntä, Tiina Räisänen, Mikko Laitinen, Heidi Koskela, Salla Lähdesmäki & Henna Jousmäki 2011. *National Survey on the English Language in Finland: Uses, meanings and attitudes*. *Studies in Variation, Contacts and Change in English* 5. Helsinki: Research Unit for Variation, Contacts and Change in English. Available at <http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/journal/volumes/05/>.

Leyland, Christopher 2011. *For mutual intelligibility, must English as a lingua franca be standardized?* *ARECLS* 8: 25-45.

Malyuga, Elena N. 2012. *Professional Language in Formal and Business Style*. *Global Journal of Human Social Science* XII:III.

- Mauranen, Anna 2003. *Academic English as lingua franca—a corpus approach*. TESOL Quarterly 37: 513-27.
- McKay, Sandra Lee 2002. *Teaching English as an International Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mero, Milja 2013. *ELF in Finnish ELT: Students' Opinions at Lahti University of Applied Sciences*. Unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, School of Language, Translation and Literary Studies, University of Tampere.
- Murray, Neil 2012. *English as a lingua franca and the development of pragmatic competence*. ELT Journal 66, 3: 318-326.
- Ranta, Elina 2010. *English in the real world vs. English at school: Finnish English teachers' and students' view*. International Journal of Applied Linguistics 20, 2:156-177.
- Prodromou, Luke 2008. *English as a Lingua Franca: A Corpus-based Analysis*. Norfolk: Biddles.
- Prodromou, Luke 2010. *English as a Lingua Franca: A Corpus-based Analysis*. London: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Riemer, Marc J. 2002. *English and Communication Skills for the Global Engineer*. Global J. of Engng. Educ., Vol.6, No.1 Australia: UICEE.
- Seidlhofer, Barbara 2005. *KEY CONCEPTS IN ELT: English as a lingua franca*. ELT Journal 59, 4: 339-341.
- Saville-Troike, Muriel 2006. *Introducing Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge University Press.
- Statista. 2016. [Internet] The most spoken languages worldwide (speakers and native speaker in millions) Available from [statista.com/statistics/266808/the-most-spoken-languages-worldwide/](https://www-statista-com.translate.googl/statistics/266808/the-most-spoken-languages-worldwide/). [Accessed 11 August 2016]
- Subtirelu, Nicholas 2013. *What (do) learners want (?): a re-examination of the issue of learner preferences regarding the use of 'native' speaker norms in English language teaching*. Language Awareness, Vol. 22, No. 3, 270–291 Atlanta: Routledge

Ur, Penny 2010. *English as a Lingua Franca: A Teacher's Perspective*. *Cadernos de Letras* 27: 85-92.

Valtaranta, Niina 2013. *On the Experiences of Finnish Engineers as Language Users in a Professional Context*. Academic dissertation University of Tampere.

Väänänen P. 1992. *Need of English in mechanical engineering: A target task identification*. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Finnish interview questions

1. Kuka olet, minkä ikäinen, missä työskentelet, mikä on työtehtäväsi, minkälainen työhistoria ja koulutus sinulla on?
2. Miten kuvailisit omaa englannin kielen taitoasi? (asteikolla 4-10 ja sanallisesti) Millaista englantia puhut? Millaista englantia luulet muiden odottavan sinun puhuvan?
3. Minkälaisen kielitaidon haluaisit? (Haluaisitko/Mitä kielitaitosi osa-alueita haluaisit parantaa? Huolettaako sinua joku kielitaidossasi?)
4. Miten vertailisit englannin kielen taitojasi muihin suomalaisiin/ kollegoihisi?
5. Kumpi on mielestäsi tärkeämpää englanniksi kommunikoitaessa: kieliopillisesti oikein puhuminen vai viestin perille saaminen? Miksi?
6. Vaivaannutko jos et ole varma siitä, että osaat sanoa aikomasi kieliopillisesti oikein? Miksi?
7. Pyritkö puhumaan jollain tietyllä aksentilla? /Haluaisitko? Miksi?
8. Minkälaisen kielitaidon kouluopetus mahdollistaa? Mihin asioihin englanninopetuksessa tulisi mielestäsi keskittyä? Millaista sinun saamasi opetus oli?
9. Antaako englannin opetus AMK:ssa/yliopistossa hyvät valmiudet käyttää kieltä itsenäisesti koulun jälkeisessä elämässä? Mihin asioihin englanninopetuksessa tulisi mielestäsi keskittyä? Missä ja millä keinoin olet saavuttanut nykyisen kielitaitosi?
10. Missä annetuista vaihtoehdoista hyödynnät englannin kielen taitoasi eniten, valitse 3: TV/Elokuvat, musiikki, muut harrastukset, työ, ystävät ja muut ihmissuhteet, matkustelu, muu? Millaisissa asioissa/tilanteissa käytät englantia työssäsi?
11. Miltä sinusta tuntuu käyttää englantia työssäsi?
12. Kumpien kanssa käytät englantia enemmän: natiivien vai ei-natiivien?
13. Miten kuvailisit kommunikointia äidinkielenään ja ei äidinkielenään englantia puhuvien kanssa? (Minkä maalaisista sinulla on kokemusta? Miten he ymmärtävät sinua? Muuttuuko kielenkäyttösi eri ihmisten kanssa? Mikä siihen vaikuttaa?)
14. Onko työelämä muuttanut käsityksiäsi tai tuntemuksiasi englannin käyttämisestä? Miten? Uskotko kielitaitosi kehittyvän tulevaisuudessa?
15. Oletteko keskustelleet kielitaidosta ja kielenkäyttötilanteista kollegoidesi kanssa?
16. A) Tukeeko työnantajasi täydennyskoulutusta myös kielten osalta?

B) Millainen tarve sinulla on täydennyskoulutukseen?

17. Mitä oletat, että kollegasi vastaisivat omasta puolestaan kysymyksiin:

- Miten kuvailisit omaa englannin kielen taitoasi?
- Vaivaannutko jos et ole varma siitä, että osaat sanoa aikomasi kieliopillisesti oikein?
- Pyritkö puhumaan jollain tietyllä aksentilla?
- Miltä sinusta tuntuu käyttää englantia työssäsi?
- Millainen tarve sinulla on täydennyskoulutukseen

Appendix 2. English translation of the interview questions

1. Name, age, workplace+ job +work history, and studies?
2. How would you describe your English skills? (scale 4-10 and verbally) What kind of English do you speak? What kind of English do you think others expect from you?
3. What kind of English skills would you like to have? Are you worried about something about your English?
4. How would you compare your English skills to those of your colleagues or other Finns?
5. Which do you think is more important when communicating in English: being grammatically correct or getting your message across? Why?
6. Do you feel uneasy expressing your thoughts in English if you are not sure of the grammatical correctness of what you want to say?
7. Do you keep to a specific variety of English in your own use of English? Would you like to?
8. What kind of language skills does school education enable? What was teaching like when you studied English?
9. Does the English instruction at a higher level provide students with good abilities to use the language independently in life after school? Where and how have you gained your current English skills? What should teaching focus on?
10. Indicate three items of given alternatives that you use your English skills most for at the moment: TV/movies, music, other hobbies, work, friends and other relationships, travelling, other. In what kind of situations do you use English at work?
11. What does it feel like to use English at work?
12. With whom do you use English more: native or non-native people?
13. How would you describe communicating with native and non-native people? With what nationalities have you used English? How do they understand you? Does your language use change with different people?
14. Has working life changed your views and feelings about using English? How? Do you believe your English skills will keep on developing?
15. Have you talked about language skills and situations regarding language use with your colleagues?
16. A) Does/would your employer support in-service training/updating education when it comes to English?
B) What kind of a need do you have for in-service training?
17. What do you assume your colleagues would answer on their behalf?
- How would you describe your English skills?

- Do you feel uneasy expressing your thoughts in English if you are not sure of the grammatical correctness of what you want to say?
- Do you keep to a specific variety of English in your own use of English?
- What does it feel like to use English at work?

Appendix 3

The questionnaire is conducted for my Bachelor's thesis in spring 2013. The results will be treated anonymously and they will not be published.

Milja Mero
University of Tampere
Spring 2013
milja.mero@uta.fi

AGE:

FEMALE MALE

I STUDY: AT THE FACULTY OF TECHNOLOGY

AT THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH CARE

IN THE INSTITUTE OF DESIGN AND FINE ARTS

PREVIOUS EDUCATION: VOCATIONAL SCHOOL UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL
OTHER

Circle your choice(s).

1. Indicate three items of given alternatives that you use your English skills most for at the moment.
 - a) TV/ Movies
 - b) Music
 - c) Other hobbies: _____
 - d) Work
 - e) Studies
 - f) Friends & other relationships
 - g) Travelling
 - h) Other, what? _____

2. What do you think you will need your English skills for in the future?
 - a) TV/ Movies
 - b) Music
 - c) Other hobbies: _____
 - d) Friends & other relationships
 - e) Travelling
 - f) Future work
 - g) Future studies in Finland and/or abroad
 - h) Other, what? _____

3. Predict with whom you will use English more in the future.
 - a) Native speakers
 - b) Non-native speakers

4. Do you keep to a specific variety of English in your own use of English?
 - a) No
 - b) Yes, British English
 - c) Yes, American English
 - d) Other

- Give reasons for your choice:

Appendix 3

The questionnaire is conducted for my Bachelor's thesis in spring 2013. The results will be treated anonymously and they will not be published.

91

Milja Mero
University of Tampere
Spring 2013
milja.mero@uta.fi

5. Does teaching at a university of applied sciences provide information on other varieties of English than British and American?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 - c) Undecided

6. Would you prefer native or non-native speakers of English as visitors in the class? (to practice your English with them)
 - a) Native
 - b) Non-native
 - c) Whichever

- Justify your answer:

7. In communicating in English, what do you think is most important?
 - a) Getting one's message across
 - b) Being grammatically correct

Take a stance on the following statements.

8. "It is often difficult to understand non-native English speakers (e.g. on TV)."
 - a) Agree
 - b) Disagree
 - c) Undecided

9. "I feel uneasy expressing my thoughts in English if I am not sure of the grammatical correctness of what I want to say."
 - a) Agree
 - b) Disagree
 - c) Undecided

10. "English teaching at a university of applied sciences pays more attention to students' ability to communicate in English than to grammatical correctness."
 - a) Agree
 - b) Disagree
 - c) Undecided

11. "English instruction at a university of applied sciences provides students with good abilities to use the language independently in life after school."
 - a) Agree
 - b) Disagree
 - c) Undecided

- Justify your answer:
