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Postprint

This is the accepted version of a paper published in *AILA Review*. This paper has been peer-reviewed but does not include the final publisher proof-corrections or journal pagination.

Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Hynninen, N. (2012)

ICL at the micro level: L2 speakers taking on the role of language experts.

AILA Review, 25: 13-29

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1075/aila.25.02hyn>

Access to the published version may require subscription.

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:su:diva-82534>

This final draft has been published as follows: Hynninen, Niina (2012) ICL at the micro level: L2 speakers taking on the role of language experts. *AILA Review*, 25, 13–29. Special issue on Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education, ed. by Ute Smit and Emma Dafouz Milne. DOI: 10.1075/aila.25.02hyn. For permissions to re-use or reprint, please contact the publisher John Benjamins.

ICL at the micro level: L2 speakers taking on the role of language experts*

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the construction of language expertise in international, university-level English-medium courses where English is used as a lingua franca. Even if the courses are not language courses, language sometimes becomes the topic of discussion in the form of language correcting and commentary. This paper looks into these instances, where the teachers (i.e. subject experts) and students can be seen to take on, or be allotted, the role of language experts. The findings show that this role can be (1) based on a speaker's professional role and expertise in the relevant subject, (2) allotted to a native speaker of English, (3) negotiated between speakers, or (4) assigned to an English instructor. This paper discusses the implications of who takes on the role of language expert, and considers, in particular, to what extent the role still falls on native speakers of English. It will be shown that non-native speakers of English take on the role of language experts, and that this has implications for the kind of regulation done in the lingua franca interaction. The findings shed light on the micro-level realisation of Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education.

Introduction

As a result of the increase in English-medium instruction (EMI) in higher education institutions outside English-speaking countries (e.g. Graddol 2006: 73–80), more and more students and teachers (i.e. subject experts) communicate by using English as the shared language, a lingua franca. Despite this prominence of the lingua franca use of English, only some studies have focused on the interaction in English-medium courses from this perspective (e.g. Björkman 2008; Knapp 2011a, 2011b). Specifically, research on integrating content and language (ICL) in higher education and research on English as a lingua franca (ELF) are typically not brought together (for an exception, see Smit 2010). This paper, with its focus on the micro-level of EMI, is an attempt to bring the two research traditions closer together. In order to consider practices of integrating content and language at the micro-level of EMI, I explore which language expert roles the students and teachers construct as relevant when communicating in English-medium courses. The aim of

this study, then, is to find out how language expertise is constructed in ELF interaction in EMI settings: who takes on the role of language expert, who is assigned that role, and what ‘normative’ authorities become relevant for the speakers. A further aim is to consider the implications of the expertise construction on the kind of regulation done in ELF interaction.

The data used in this study come from the University of Helsinki, Finland, a prime example of a higher education institution where the last decade has resulted in a surge of new English-medium degree programmes. The data consist of audio-recordings of ELF interaction in English-medium course and group-work meetings (see Method section). In the analysis, I focus on what language expert roles the students and teachers construct in the interaction. I approach language expertise in the interaction by considering: (a) who corrects and comments on their interlocutors’ language, that is, who takes on the role of language expert, and (b) who is asked to correct or comment, that is, who is allotted the role of language expert. By focusing on these aspects of ELF interaction, it is possible to see what ‘normative’ authorities are constructed as relevant in the interaction, and what role ELF speakers take in the process (cf. Smit 2010). Since the data come from EMI in higher education, the findings are important in demonstrating ways in which content and language are integrated in the practice of EMI – and ways in which language questions are taken up even if language is not the topic of the course or group work.

The findings further shed light on the question of ownership of English from the perspective of ELF speakers. The spread of English has prompted scholars to discuss who can have custody over English, or the authority for codification of English. This has been done both in relation to World Englishes (e.g. Kachru 1996) and increasingly for the use of English in lingua franca settings (Jenkins 2000; Seidlhofer 2009, 2011). The discussions have led to a reconsideration of the role of native speakers of English in how English develops in the world, and the questioning of native speaker (NS) ownership of English (as argued, for instance, in Widdowson 1994), which in turn has raised the question of who, then, ‘should’ propose standards for the use of ELF (Jenkins 2000). These conceptual considerations are important for adjusting paradigms for the teaching and testing of English to better respond to the use of English in today’s world (see Canagarajah 2006). In this paper, however, I move from the conceptual level to the level of interaction in ELF to see to what extent speakers of ELF can be seen to question the so called NS ownership of English.

Before turning to the analysis, I describe the situation of EMI at the University of Helsinki, and introduce the ELF approach adopted in this study.

EMI at the University of Helsinki

At the University of Helsinki, along with a number of individual courses arranged in English, there are over 35 international, English-medium master’s degree programmes, all of which have been established after the turn of the millennium (E. Koponen, international education adviser, personal

communication, 25 Jan 2012). This reflects a general trend within the last decade, with an unprecedented spread of international degree programmes run in English in higher education institutions outside English-speaking countries (e.g. Graddol 2006: 73–80; Wächter 2008). Within Europe, higher education measures have been taken to harmonise degree structures across European countries, and to promote student and teacher mobility in an attempt to create a European Higher Education Area (Räsänen & Fortanet-Gómez 2008: 14–18; see Bologna Process). Especially the encouragement for mobility can be seen to increase the need for higher education institutions to establish courses and degree programmes run in an international language – most frequently English – to attract international students and staff. That English should be the international language chosen is probably due to its status as a global lingua franca, which increases the chances for *worldwide* student and staff mobility. Finland, along with other European countries with small national languages is among the countries that most readily have embraced the introduction of EMI in higher education in Europe (Ammon & McConnell 2002; Wächter 2008). This special position of English is attested in the University of Helsinki Language Policy, where EMI is seen as one of the key elements in furthering international co-operation: “Developing and increasing the range of programmes taught in English is an integral part of creating an international learning environment” (UH Language Policy 2007: 43).

What does this international learning environment, then, look like? With some exceptions, English-medium courses at the University of Helsinki are open to all students at the university, including degree students studying in English-medium programmes, exchange students, and domestic students not studying in the programmes. Exchange and domestic students go through different admission procedures compared to those applying for English-medium programmes. When applying for a degree programme, applicants are expected to pass a language test in English, which means that, already upon entering the programme, the selected applicants are expected to possess good enough skills in English to complete their degree (see Graduate admissions for the accepted tests and exemption criteria). Exchange students are also expected to prove their skills in English, but different rules apply (see Exchange student admissions). This means that students attending a course may have passed different types of language requirements. The resulting variation in the students’ proficiency in and use of English is what the students and teachers need to cope with. This was also the reality in the course and group-work meetings focused on in this study: there was variation in the student status as well as the students’ self-reports¹ of their skills in English. It should also be noted that teachers are not tested for their English skills, but rather it is left for the teachers themselves to evaluate whether they can teach in English or not.

Support in English is integrated in most of the English-medium degree programmes. This is in line with the university’s Language Policy, which states that

[t]eachers teaching in English and students studying in English-language programmes will be offered language support which aims to improve their ability to interact in English in a multicultural academic environment (UH Language Policy 2007: 45).

The university is thus already tackling some of the concerns that the increase in the use of English in academia has caused (see Coleman 2006; Phillipson 2006). What is notable is that the language policy talks about the academic environment as “international” and “multicultural” and describes the aims to improve teachers’ and students’ ability to interact in English in relation to such an environment. This means that the policy advocates the training of English for the purposes of using it as a lingua franca. This study, with its focus on the micro-level of using ELF in EMI can, then, be used to inform the current language-training practices.

The institute responsible for providing students (and staff) with language instruction is the Language Centre of the university (see LC). The Language Centre arranges courses in a range of different languages for students from all faculties, and offers custom-made language support in most English-medium degree programmes (see EM support). Through its Language Services unit the Language Centre also provides the personnel of the university with, for instance, courses on teaching in English, as well as translation and language revision services.

The English-language courses and support are meant for degree students only. The language support given in the degree programmes is mainly geared towards improving the students’ academic writing skills in English, but some attention is put, for instance, on presentation skills. There is variation as regards the amount of support in English offered in the different programmes, whether it is obligatory for the students or not, and to what extent the support is integrated in the actual content classes; rather than offered as adjunct language (or academic writing) courses, as has been customary for courses in English for Specific Purposes (Räsänen & Fortanet-Gómez 2008: 43).

In the course and group-work meetings focused on in this study, integrated language support on how to give a presentation in English was given in one group. All students in the group, irrespective of their student status received comments from the English instructor attending the group-work meetings. Also, as will be shown in the Results section, language was taken up by the subject teachers and/or the students in the other groups as well, and thus became the focus of attention even if language support as such was not integrated in the groups’ meetings. Individual students might also have personal motivations for learning English, and as Smit (2010) points out, it is plausible to suggest that language learning takes place, even if it may not be an official goal in itself.

Saarinén and Nikula’s (2012) study focusing on descriptions for English-medium degree programmes in Finnish higher education institutions suggests that the programmes are not perceived as environments for language learning: the role of English remains marginal in the

programme descriptions, and English skills are stated as a prerequisite for studying in the programme, rather than something to be developed during one's studies. While the English language requirements for degree students at the University of Helsinki suggest the same, EMI in the degree programmes can be seen as content-focused teaching, which, because of the integration of language support, illustrates "moves towards the adoption of CLIL [or rather, ICL]²" (Coyle, Hood & Marsh 2010: 26; my comment). In addition, taking up language as a topic in actual course and group-work interaction (see Results section) sheds light on the micro-level integration of content and language in an EMI setting.

EMI as interaction in English as a lingua franca

In the EMI setting focused on in this study, English functioned as the students' and teachers' lingua franca, which by definition refers to a language used for communication between people who do not share a first language (L1). The students and teachers, then, are viewed primarily as users of English for whom the language is a common means of communication; and not as learners of English as a second or foreign language who seek to improve their language skills. Of course, integrated language support does place students in the position of language learners, and it is also possible that a speaker takes on the role of language learner, for instance, by referring to his or her English as inadequate. However, since the main purpose of EMI in the course and group-work meetings in this study was to discuss set themes and/or to prepare a joint presentation, English was a means of communication – not the object of study. Also evaluation focused on the students' course and group-work performance, not their English skills. What thus becomes important is a focus on interaction in ELF.

Research on ELF has been conducted on different types of ELF interaction, ranging from academic to business and more casual settings (for an overview see Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey 2011; for academic ELF see Björkman 2011; Mauranen 2011). Previous studies where EMI in higher education has been approached as ELF interaction have looked into, for instance, the morphosyntax (Björkman 2008), pragmatics (Björkman 2009; Hynninen 2011; Knapp 2011a, 2011b; Smit 2009, 2010) and interactional features of EMI (Suviniitty forthcoming). In addition, studies on the ELFA corpus of English as an Academic Lingua Franca shed light on such ELF interaction (e.g. Mauranen 2006, 2007; Metsä-Ketelä 2006; Ranta 2006; see ELFA), although the corpus includes other types of academic speech events than educational ones (e.g. conference presentations), as well. ELF studies dealing with higher education have further looked into lecture comprehension (e.g. Airey 2009; Mulligan and Kirkpatrick 2000), and some also report on student and teacher views of EMI in international settings (e.g. Jensen & Thøgersen 2011; Pecorari et al. 2011; Smit 2010: 121–147). The closest research focus to the one taken in this study is Smit (2010: ch 7),

whose analysis on interactive explaining sheds light on language expertise in English-medium lectures.

Despite the increasing number of studies on ELF, and the central role of ELF interaction in higher education today, most of EMI/ICL in higher education research has not incorporated ELF research and its findings. This is surprising, because if we want to understand the situation in higher education today, we need to take into account the interactional settings in which teachers and students communicate. In international English-medium degree programmes, this means a focus on ELF. This study can thus be seen as an attempt to build bridges between research on EMI/ICL in higher education and ELF research. I do this by examining the micro-level of ELF interaction in EMI settings, particularly focusing on the construction of language expertise in such interaction.

Method

In this study, interaction in EMI settings is approached as interaction in ELF. The data come from English-medium course and group-work meetings, where English was not the subject of teaching, but rather the lingua franca used for in-group communication. In the following section, I describe the data and their collection in more detail, after which I take a look at the methods of analysis.

Data collection

The data were collected for the purposes of a wider study on language regulation (Hynninen submitted), as part of the *Studying in English as a lingua franca* project at the University of Helsinki (see SELF). The data collection was ethnographically influenced: naturally-occurring interactions in EMI settings were audio-recorded and observed, and students and teachers attending the events interviewed. In this study, however, I only draw on the interactions and their transcripts. The interactions were chosen based on three criteria: (1) that English was a necessary lingua franca for in-group communication; (2) that the interactions were polylogues, rather than monologues; and (3) that the interactions came from different types of EMI settings, with different combinations of institutional speaker roles. For the purpose of analysing language expertise construction in ELF interaction, the key was to focus on more interactional contexts than lectures. In addition, I used different types of EMI settings in order to see what kind of effect institutional speaker roles may have on language expertise construction.

The data, then, consist of audio-recordings (in total ca. 20 h 35 min) and their transcripts of (a) interrelated group-work meetings of two discussion groups in the fields of biology and forestry, and (b) a course in the field of forestry. Both discussion groups aimed at preparing a joint presentation on a given topic. One discussion group was an all-student group with five students; the

other also had five students, but was guided by two junior scholars who acted as the group's mentors. In addition, an English instructor visited the latter group for a short time on two occasions. In the course, students gave presentations (based on written reports) that were then discussed in class. The course had 11 students and two teachers. The students and mentors/teachers in these events represented different L1s (e.g. Arabic, Spanish and Finnish), and they thus used ELF. One student in both discussion groups and two students in the course were NSs of English.

Data analysis

A close analysis of language commenting and correcting was done to explore language expert roles of the speakers in the ELF interaction. Overt language comments of both one's own and each other's language, that is, metalingual, rather than metadiscursive, comments (Berry 2005: 8–12) were taken into closer analysis. All metalingual comments were collected and classified according to who did the commenting, and if the commenting was allocated, who assigned the expert role to whom. With metalingual comments, I mean references to and comments on language (e.g. *what's that in English, when you are pronouncing the word*), which means that my focus is on those instances of the interaction where language is taken up as a topic. Metadiscourse, or talk about the talk itself (e.g. *as I said before, does this sound...to you*), is excluded from the analysis (for studies on metadiscourse, see e.g. papers in Ädel & Mauranen 2010).

In addition to metalingual commenting, the analysis focused on other corrections of language. All instances of corrections were collected and classified in terms of who initiated and who actually did the correcting. In Conversation Analysis, other corrections fall under the category of other repairs, which refers to those instances of interaction where participants temporarily stop the course of action in progress in order to solve some communicational 'trouble' (Brouwer, Rasmussen & Wagner 2004; Schegloff 1992; Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks 1977; Schegloff et al. 2002). This means that only such instances are considered where the repair forms a side sequence in the interaction (cf. Jefferson 1987). Extract (1) illustrates the structure of a repair sequence. Transcription conventions are given at the end of this paper, and important bits in the extracts are marked with italics.

(1)

<S4> ((...)) they have different climatic conditions er ranging from (sahara) or semi-arid zone to the tropical zone where annual rainfall is er is 100 or 15000 millimetre annually but er [beekeeping] </S4>

<T1> [*not 15000*] 1000- er 1500 </T1>

<S4> yeah 1500 yeah 1500 1000 and 500 millimetre annually but er it's still in separate areas scattered area(s) you will find bee practice beekeeping practice but ((...))

In the extract, S4's presentation on beekeeping is interrupted by T1's repair (*not 15,000 1000- er 1500*). This is followed by S4 repeating the repaired item, after which he continues with the topic at hand. The repair thus forms a side sequence in the interaction. Extract (1) shows that repairs may or may not concern language, which makes the category too broad for my purposes. For this reason I have narrowed down the category of repairs to repairs dealing with language, that is, language corrections. Extract (1) is treated as a borderline case, since it deals with the contents of the presentation. At the same time, however, it is a correction of linguistic form and can thus be seen to have a dual function as a content repair and a language correction. In this study, along with language commenting, both other corrections of language (as in extract (1)) and corrections initiated by the speaker are included in the analysis in order to consider both the adoption and allocation of language expertise in ELF.

To sum up, I used the above criteria in finding those instances of the interaction where speakers took on the role of language experts, and where expertise was allocated to an interlocutor. This was done to make the analysis as systematic as possible. After the classification of the metalingual comments and the language corrections, I analysed the instances for the kind of commenting and correcting done. Language commenting and correcting were chosen because they are explicit means of intervening in language during interaction, and thus represent clear instances of language expertise construction.

Results

Instances of metalingual commenting and/or language correcting were found in all of the group-work and course meetings, even if the scope and type of the metalingual comments varied from meeting to meeting, and even if language corrections in general were uncommon. Based on a close analysis of the metalingual comments and the corrections, I discerned four language expert roles in the data: (1) one based on subject expertise, which was related to a speaker's professional role and expertise in the relevant subject, (2) L1-based expertise, which means that the authority was allocated to a NS of English, (3) negotiation between speakers, where any of the speakers could do the commenting, and (4) expertise of the language professional, which means that an English instructor was treated as the language expert. Below, I analyse each of the categories in turn to consider what 'normative' authorities the speakers constructed as relevant in the interaction.

Subject teacher as the language expert

When language was commented on or corrected in the groups, it was mostly done by the teachers and mentors, who were sometimes asked to take on the role of language expert, but who also took on the role themselves. The following extract (2) illustrates how language was taken up as a topic even if it did not concern field-specific terminology. The extract is from a discussion after a student's (S8) presentation.

(2)

<T2> ((...)) could we take a few language questions here </T2>

<T1> yes please </T1>

<T2> er er <NAME S8> *correctly* used the the th- th- the name of the country as the sudan remember that this is the the name of the country the sudan like the gambia there are a few country names where you have the although the *modern usage* is (to omit it) the only thing you have to be con- consequent either you always say the sudan the sudan or then without the but there are this is one of the few country names where where it is </T2>

<BS2> [so why (is it why is it)] </BS2>

<T2> [er and th- the] government uses it's the republic of the sudan that's (the) *official name* of the country </T2>

<BS2> so why do they use the </BS2>

<T2> th- we you have to ask linguists there are er like the gambia (it) because it [refers to] </T2>

<T1> [or the netherlands] </T1>

<T2> what </T2>

<T1> the netherlands </T1>

<T2> jaa f- er plural names are natural you know why it is but er but er gambia it's because the river *rivers always have the* so that follows a- and sudan it there was something similar it was the sud was th- the wet area and then the sudan came from the sud probably this is the <T1> [mhm yeah okay] </T1> [explanation] this is my my my understanding but it's also *correct* to say without the [nowadays] <S2> [mhm-hm] </S2> especially *in scientific contexts* </T2>

In the extract, T2 takes an active role in suggesting language as a topic (*could we take a few language questions here*), after which he takes on the role of language expert by commenting on the ‘correctness’ of a country name used in a student’s presentation and written report. We can see that the teacher expresses his internalised conception of the correct usage by referring to *modern usage* and usage *in scientific contexts* as opposed to the official name of the country and the grammar rule *rivers always have the*. There are thus two opposing forces at play in the teacher’s comment: for one, the teacher draws on established standards, that is, the official name of the country, and the grammar rule generally taught in English language classes; but for another, his comment implies that usage in scientific contexts legitimises ‘new’ language norms. Of course, what is important is not whether the teacher is ‘correct’ in his understanding of the usage, but that he is ready to accept ‘scientific contexts’ as norm providing.

This can further be seen to mean that the teacher is leaning on his role as an expert in his field, rather than English; but on the basis of his experience of scientific contexts, he is confident enough to make the claim. This is evidence for the language expert role being based on the speaker’s professional role and expertise in the relevant subject matter. It is also notable that the teacher took on the role of language expert even if he was a second language (L2)³ speaker of English and even if he was not a language professional. Nor did he ask either of the two students who spoke English as an L1 in the group for help. Rather, extract (2) shows that one of the NSs of English (BS2, a native speaker of Twi and West-African English) is the one who poses T2 the question *so why do they use the*, which can be seen as a sign of acknowledging the teacher’s authority on English.

As we can see in extracts (3) and (4), the students tended to turn to the teachers and mentors if they experienced trouble in expressing themselves. In extract (3), a student (S6) seeks help for a particular term during his presentation.

(3)

<S6> ((...)) and this is er a very well this is like the typical the most typical plant in western sahara *i don't know the name* [(xx)] </S6>

<T2> [(calotropis)] </T2>

<S6> i </S6>

<T2> (calotropis) </T2>

<S6> okay *i knew that you could help (me) with this* and this erm this is erm a very important ((...)) </S6>

<T2> the english name is dead sea apple dead sea apple is the [name] <SU> [mhm] </SU> of the (calotropis in english). </T2>

The extract shows that we are dealing with terminology from the teacher's area of expertise, and that the teacher provides both the scientific and the English name of the plant (*calotropis*, *dead sea apple*) in question. The teacher's expertise in the subject matter thus ties in with language, similarly to what Smit (2010: 362–365) reports in her study. The extract (3) also illustrates the assignment of the language expert role to the teacher: we can see that the student expected the teacher to be able to help him (*I knew that you could help (me) with this*).

Similarly, extract (4) shows a mentor (M2) providing language help.

(4)

<S3> i think er <FINNISH> suomen luonnonsuojeluliitto </FINNISH> what's that in english </S3>

<M2> i think it's the finnish association for nature conservation </M2>

<S3> okay they they complained to EU couple of years ago i don't know was that any help or has EU decided anything </S3>

In this extract, a student (S3) asks for an English translation of a name of a Finnish association, which is then provided by M2. We can see that S3 makes use of a partially shared language in the group⁴, which means that an English translation was needed for all the group members to be included. Such use of partially shared languages foregrounds the multilingual setting of the ELF encounters, and shows how different languages can become important in negotiating language expertise (see Smit 2010: 280–282, 367–370).

In all, language expertise based on subject expertise illustrates that in ELF settings, being a NS of English does not automatically transform into authority in language. Rather, the extracts showed that students at times assigned language expertise to the teachers (and mentors), which acknowledged the language expert role of the teachers. That the teachers were active in taking on the role of language expert further illustrates the agency of L2 speakers of English in the ELF settings – even if NSs of English were present.

NS of English as the language expert

Having said that subject expertise also brought with it some form of language expertise, the data also show allocation of the language expert role to NSs of English. However, such allocation was only done by the students. This is illustrated in extract (5), where a student (S3) expresses her wish that another student (NS5) in the group do the proof reading of the group's presentation slides. NS5 is a NS of Canadian English.

(5)

<S3> and for example if you <REFERS TO NS5> check(ed) the language it (would) be easier to, speak (right) <NS5> mhm-hm </NS5> like @right@ right way </S3>

The extract not only illustrates that the student allocates the role of language expert to a NS of English, but in doing so she also constructs the importance of ‘correctness’ (*speak (right)*), which she sees in relation to English spoken by the NS.

Another extract (6) illustrates how a student with English as an L1 was asked to help with spelling.

(6)

<S2> er how do you write traditional knowledge </S2>

<S5> knowledge </S5>

<S2> mhm </S2>

<S5> (xx) (how do you) </S5>

<S2> (xx) *how is it* <NAME NS3> *help (with english)* </S2>

<S5> knowledge it’s something like this [knowledge] </S5>

<S2> [traditional] knowledge kn- K N </S2>

<NS3> er O W, L E </NS3>

<S2> E </S2>

<S5> (xx) (D) yeah yeah </S5>

<NS3> [yes] </NS3>

In the extract, S2 addresses NS3 (the NS of English in this group), but as we can see, S5 offers help first, and the three students end up spelling the word in collaboration. Even if the NS of English was assigned the role of language expert, there was thus some overlap with the third category of negotiated expertise, where anyone could take on the role of language expert (see below).

The extracts illustrate that NSs of English were used as language experts, and thus their NS status was constructed as relevant. What is notable, though, is that the assignment of language expertise to the students who spoke English as an L1 was only done by the students.

Negotiated language expertise

In addition to language expertise based on subject matter expertise and L1 status, the data also gave rise to expertise negotiated between speakers. This means that the expert role could be taken on by anyone in the interaction and that any of the speakers could occasionally ask for help. The following extract (7) is a case where a mentor (M1) throws in a Finnish word in an attempt to get help from the groups' Finnish speakers (two students and the other mentor (M2) in the group spoke Finnish).

(7)

<M1> alright so next time <NAME S3> is chairing (for) you at least (or) everybody needs pen and paper (but) @at least you you need to be prepared@ <BACKGROUND NOISE> and let's er try to make it <FINNISH> kunnianhimoinen </FINNISH> </M1>

<M2> ambitious </M2>

<SU-1> ambitious </SU-1>

<M1> ambitious but also try to keep in the schedule so like er like next session is very free discussion about whatever comes into your mind about saimaa seal but then we'll try to push into, whatever we find interesting to limit it so that we don't end up sitting here six times having interesting discussions but not getting anywhere </M1>

We can see in the extract that M2 and SU-1 step in with the English translation of the Finnish word, which is then accepted by M1 who repeats the translation. The floor was open for anyone to take on the language expert role, and we can see that two of the Finnish speakers do that (the other mentor and a student). We can thus treat this extract as a case of language expertise negotiation. The extract further demonstrates the multilingual nature of ELF encounters (see also extract (4)), and the way speakers can draw on partially shared languages when need be. Negotiation can be seen as a means to ensure mutual understanding in the whole group – in extract (7), a translation was needed to include all group members.

Negotiation of language expertise also meant that a student could take on the expert role. This is the case in extract (8), where a student (S2) corrects another student (S5).

(8)

<S2> and you have the this economics [er techniques] </S2>

<S5> [yeah (there) are economics] but of course er i haven't write i haven't numbers or a study yeah it's something like er (O) it's about O-N-G yeah O-N-G er </S5>

<S2> N-G-O </S2>

<S5> N-G-O yeah O-N-G is in spanish sorry </S5>

<S2> [(that's okay)] </S2>

<S5> [N-G-O yeah] N-G-O and er they have a lot of pages but of course nothing about er numbers. </S5>

The extract is a case of other correction where the correction is done without the speaker initiating the correction. The student doing the correcting was a NS of Brazilian Portuguese who reported to speak some Spanish, which may have helped her in deciphering the acronym that S5 used. It is also further evidence of the usefulness of partially shared languages (in this case Spanish) in ELF interaction (see Cogo & Dewey 2006; Hülmbauer 2009; Smit 2010: 280–282, 367–370).

In all, the extracts of negotiation of language expertise showed that any of the speakers could occasionally ask for help, and that any of the speakers could act as the language expert. In general, it was rare for anyone to correct a mentor's or a teacher's language, although a few such instances did occur – mainly when initiated by the speaker (see extract 7). Negotiation of language expertise thus suggests that language expertise was not necessarily connected to subject expertise or one's status as a NS of English.

Language professional as the language expert

In addition to the three expert roles above, a fourth one, expertise of the language professional, could be found in one discussion group, where an English instructor paid two short visits to the group: the instructor attended the beginning of one of the group-work meetings to see how the group was doing, and he came to listen to and comment on the group's mock presentation. The instructor visited the group as part of the English language support offered to master's degree programmes by the Language Centre. His presence thus meant that the students had a dual role as members of the group and therefore users of ELF, *and* as learners of English monitored by the English instructor.

During the visits of the English instructor, there was a slight increase in the group's focus on language as the instructor was used as the main expert on language. This is illustrated in extract (9).

(9)

<M1> i guess there's a sort of a problem er (what's) <FINNISH> jokamiehen oikeus
</FINNISH> </M1>

<E1> everyman's [rights] </E1>

<S1> [everyman's] rights </S1>

<SU> [yeah] </SU>

<M1> [(xx)] (xx) in finland because (er) that's sort of if you completely </M1>

The English instructor (E1) was a NS of British English, but as the extract shows, he also spoke Finnish. Extract (9) is a typical case where E1 was drawn on as a dictionary. In the extract, a mentor (M1) requests for a translation of a Finnish phrase, which is followed by E1 taking on the language expert role by providing M1 with the requested translation. The extract further shows that one of the students (S1) was also ready to step in to provide the requested phrase in English, which illustrates negotiation of language expertise in the group. However, the English instructor was used as the main expert in language. This is not surprising in the sense that as an English instructor, he was also an institutionally appointed expert in language. What is notable, though, is that the instructor was allotted the role of language expert over the mentors and students in the group (including the English-NS student).

In his comments on the group's mock presentation, E1 commented on, for instance, pronunciation, as illustrated in extract (10).

(10)

<E1> but one (other) thing <NAME S4> just to note that that when you're pronouncing the word cave if you try and keep it distinct <S4> yeah </S4> you're saying (it) sometimes as as cove <S4> ah okay </S4> and a cove is quite a different thing <S4> [@@] </S4> [it's more like] an inlet like <FINNISH> ni- </FINNISH> <S4> yeah yeah </S4> <FINNISH> niemi </FINNISH>⁵ in finnish </E1>

<S4> okay thank you </S4>

What the comment does is to foreground language issues in the group. E1's comment is directed at S4, a NS of Spanish, which means that his use of Finnish may only be explained by the presence of other group members who did speak Finnish.

In all, the analysis shows that the presence of an institutionally appointed language expert changed the nature of the interaction in that when the English instructor was present, the group tended to assign language expertise to him. The findings thus imply that an institutional authority overrode other language expert roles. Importantly, though, we saw that language was corrected and taken up as a topic in the form of metalingual comments also in those course and group-work meetings where the explicit focus was on content only.

Discussion and conclusions

We saw in the extracts that language could be taken up as a topic by any of the speakers, but that the way this was done took different forms: Firstly, the teachers/mentors took on the role of language experts more actively than the students, and only the students assigned language expertise to NSs of English. Secondly, the presence of an English instructor influenced the assignment of expert roles. The findings show that language correcting and metalingual commenting were done in the groups even if the English instructor only attended one of the groups, and even if he only attended this one group occasionally. In fact, the findings show that language expertise was primarily taken on by L2 speakers of English who were also experts in the subject matter taught (subject expertise). This means that the experts in the field to some extent shared their conceptions of (good) language use with their students, and in this sense integrated language to the content classes, even if learning English was not an official aim. This implies a connection between subject-matter expertise and willingness and ability to take on the role of language expert. This interpretation is supported by the students allocating the language expert role to their teachers as seen in extracts (3) and (4). This, then again, reflects the students' role as novices in the field and as learners of the contents and conventions of that field, including those related to language use. That the students also turned to their fellow English-NS students for support in English (L1-based expertise) indicates that NSs of English were seen to possess expertise in English on the basis of their L1 status. The division between NSs and non-native speakers was thus constructed to matter, even if the main dividing line was between subject experts and novices, especially since the teachers did not rely on the English-NS students for expertise in English.

The findings to some extent correspond to Smit (2010: 362–365), where metalingual comments were found to be mainly subject specific, and the teachers the experts relied on. For subject-related terminology, then, the teachers were the language experts in both studies. Smit (2010: 365–367) also shows that anyone could take on the role of language expert in order to help out with more general terms and expressions, which was the case with negotiated expertise in this study, too. That language expertise could be negotiated further supports Smit's (2010: 374) findings that asking for language help was not seen to diminish one's expertise in the topic itself.

The difference between the two studies is, though, that in Smit (2010), there was a tendency to sign over language issues to language classes, as the following quote attests:

Whenever the interaction turned to a language issue, it concerned the introduction or explanation of mainly subject-specific terms or expressions. Other aspects of language were not topicalized in any of the 33 lessons analysed in detail, or, if identified as an issue at all, were relegated to the English language classes. (Smit 2010: 408)

In this study, speakers used a wider range of metalingual comments, and language issues came to be integrated in the course and group-work meetings also when the explicit focus was on content only. What the speakers did when commenting and correcting language was to negotiate acceptable usage. The attention to language brought to light the usefulness of plurilingual resources in the negotiation process (extracts 4 and 7–9; see Smit 2010: 280–282, 367–370), and the explicit commenting and correcting further allowed incidental language learning to take place (e.g. terminology, but also what is acceptable usage in the field).

The differences between Smit's findings and those of this study may relate to the more interactive character of the course and group-work meetings in this study, as opposed to the lectures focused on in Smit (2010). In addition, the groups in this study to an extent discussed written texts (presentation slides or reports). Written language tends to be more standardised than speech (see Milroy & Milroy 1985), and correcting and commenting on written language may thus be expected to be more straightforward. Indeed, language was more often taken up as a topic by the teachers in relation to students' written texts, although some correcting and commenting of spoken language also occurred.

The findings show that NSs of English participating in ELF interaction do not necessarily play a role as language experts, as demonstrated by the subject-expertise-based and negotiated language expertise. This is in contrast to studies of L1–L2 interaction, where it has been found that when correcting takes place, the majority of (if not all) corrections are done by L1 speakers who correct L2 speakers' language (Hosoda 2006; Kurhila 2003, papers in Gardner and Wagner 2004). Hosoda (2006), in her study on casual L1–L2 conversations in Japanese, found that although by default language form was not oriented to, the L1 and L2 speakers did orient to NS status (or language expert vs. novice roles) at some occasions. She reports that other corrections were found to occur (a) when invited by an L2 speaker (e.g. by vocabulary check), and (b) when mutual understanding was at stake (Hosoda 2006). Similarly, Kurhila's (2003) study on institutional L1–L2 talk in Finnish shows that in the L1–L2 interaction, other corrections were not common, but when they occurred, they were exclusively done by a NS of Finnish. Although the L1–L2 interactions in the two studies mentioned are not directly comparable to the ELF interaction explored in this study, they do imply that NS status matters in L1–L2 interaction; whereas the

findings of this study point towards a reduced importance of the status in ELF interaction, and an increased importance of subject matter expertise.⁶

The agency of L2 speakers of English in acting as language experts in this study further means that the findings cast doubt on the NS ownership of English (see Haberland 2011; Widdowson 1994). The question of ownership is central in terms of deciding who can take on the role of language expert, and thus decide on the norms others are supposed to follow. The traditional view has been that NSs of English are (or should be) the sole owners of English (Quirk 1990; Trudgill 2002), whereas some scholars argue that ownership can also be claimed by L2 users of English: by speakers of postcolonial varieties (Kachru 1996), and also by speakers of ELF (Jenkins 2000, Seidlhofer 2011). The central question is, of course, what speakers do in interaction. If speakers in ELF interaction grant the ownership to NSs of English, they will continue using NSs of English (and standards of English as a native language) to measure the acceptability and accuracy of their usage, which means a reliance on exonormative standards. Then again, that L2 speakers in this study were found to take on the role of language experts is a step towards endonormativity.

To sum up, this paper has contributed to the aims of the present *AILA Review* volume on ICL in European higher education by providing a micro-level perspective on interaction in EMI settings. We have seen that language was taken up as a topic in the course and group-work meetings even when an English instructor was not present. In this sense, principles of ICL were adopted at the level of interaction also when learning English was not an official aim of the course or group work. The extent to which language was focused on depended on the initiatives of the students and teachers, as well as their willingness to take on the role of experts in English. When language correcting and metalingual commenting took place, it allowed incidental language learning to occur: not only in terms of field-specific terminology, but also in terms of insider views of the language use in the field.

By focusing on language expert roles observable in ELF interaction, this study has illustrated the diversity of possible roles and the multitude of ‘normative’ authorities speakers may draw on. The findings thus imply that determining who can act as language authority or what language norms and standards are relevant for the speakers is not self-evident, but rather negotiated in interaction. Specifically, this kind of investigation sheds light on the relevance of codified standards, and can thus be used to inform the development of such standards, for instance, for the purposes of language teaching. In addition, that subject-matter expertise and taking on the role of language expert often went hand in hand suggests the importance of disciplinary literacy over ‘nativeness’. This observation supports taking disciplinary literacy as the guiding principle of teaching academic English.

Transcription conventions

The transcriptions are based on a slightly modified version of the ELFA corpus transcription guide (see <http://www.helsinki.fi/elfa>). Special symbols used in this study are explained below.

Speaker codes:

<S#>	Student
<NS#>	Student (NS of English)
<BS#>	Student (bilingual speaker with English as one of the L1s)
<T#>	Teacher
<M#>	Mentor
<E#>	English instructor
<SU-#>	Uncertain speaker identification

Transcription symbols:

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

Notes

* I would like to express my warmest thanks to all the students and teachers who participated in this study, as well as to the project assistants who helped me in the collection and transcription of the data. My thanks also go to the guest editors of this volume, Emma Dafouz Milne and Ute Smit, as well as the anonymous reviewers for their support and valuable comments on earlier drafts of this paper. This study has benefited from funding from the Studying in English as a lingua franca (SELF) project (funded by the University of Helsinki Research Funds 2008–2010), the Global English (GlobE) project (funded by the Academy of Finland 2010–2012) and the Langnet doctoral programme.

¹ I have conducted research interviews with a number of the students. With the students' self-reports I refer to the accounts they gave in the interviews. The interviews are discussed in Hynninen (2010; submitted).

² The two terms Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and ICL are often used interchangeably, but there is a tendency to favour CLIL when talking about primary and secondary education and ICL when talking about tertiary education (Gustafsson et al. 2011). Because of the specificities of EMI at tertiary level such as the diverse language backgrounds of the students and teachers (see Smit 2010: 43–44; see also introduction to this volume), the concept adopted in this study is ICL.

³ With L2, I refer to any language a person speaks in addition to his or her L1, be it his or her second, third etc. language.

⁴ In this particular group-work meeting, only two students and one mentor were present. One student spoke German as an L1, and S3 and M2 were Finnish speakers.

⁵ An 'inlet' would actually translate as 'salmi' or 'lahti', and a 'cape' as 'niemi'.

⁶ However, compare Zuengler (1993), who has shown that subject matter expertise does influence the dynamics of L1–L2 interaction, too.

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