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**THE REPERCUSSIONS OF NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE ENGLISH
ACCENTS ON PERCEIVED QUALITY AND COMPREHENSION IN
CONFERENCE INTERPRETING**

MA Thesis

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ABSTRACT

This research project examines an aspect of interpretation theory that is consequential to my own practice as an interpreter. The study investigates the effect of an interpreter's native English accent on the quality perception and comprehension of a non-native listener. In my experience as a native speaker of English living in Europe, non-native speakers of English have trouble understanding my accent, which creates instances of miscommunication. With this research, I wanted to examine whether this miscommunication carries over into my work as an interpreter.

The spread of English use in the world has led to the language becoming a *lingua franca*, or a communication-enabling language, that is not the native language of most speakers. Such a language becomes nativized according to the local linguistic system, which differentiates it from the native original, and can lead to instances of miscommunication between the in-group and out-group that are created. English is also used as a *lingua franca* in Europe and thus the end-users of interpretations into English are no longer only native speakers. Since the goal of an interpretation is to ensure communication, it is important for an interpreter to also ensure that his/her linguistic system, including accent, is accessible to the listener.

In this work, I describe the spread of English throughout Europe and the linguistic and cultural aspects that may inhibit communication between English native speakers and non-native speakers. Then, I outline the role of an interpreter's accent in the framework of interpretation theory. Finally, I run an empirical study that is impelled by the hypothesis that a non-native speaker of English may perceive an interpretation with a native accent to be higher quality than a non-native accent but that his/her actual comprehension of the non-native interpretation will be higher.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The motivation for this paper is to do research into an area of interpreting studies that is applicable to my own practice as an interpreter and that allows me to undertake research that I will hopefully be able to use to improve my performance as an interpreter. Since I am not a linguist or a theoretician, the aim of the study undertaken is not to provide a comprehensive, linguistic analysis of a phenomenon in simultaneous interpretation, but rather to identify a certain phenomenon, explore previous research that applies to the case, and to run a study that tests my own hypothesis on the matter. With results that are perhaps more beneficial to my interpreting colleagues and myself than they would or could be to those linguistic scientists doing the immensely gratifying work of advancing interpretation theory.

With this study, I am undertaking to explore a linguistic phenomenon that I first encountered as an English as a Native Language (ENL) speaker living in an environment of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) speakers. This is the matter of ELF speakers often not understanding an ENL speaker despite the ELF speaker's excellent grammatical and syntactic knowledge of the English language. In this situation, I started to notice subconscious coping mechanisms that I would use to enable communication. These coping mechanisms were prosodic (change of accent, more enounced pronunciation, different speaking rhythms), syntactic (change of word order in sentences), and semantic (less use of idiomatic language). When I started studying interpretation and became an ENL interpreter working in an ELF context, I began to contemplate how my output as a native speaker affects non-native listeners. Can they understand me or would they prefer to hear an ELF interpreter's output?

In our globalized and European Union-centered society, it is often the case that interpretations into English are not only done for British or American listeners but also ELF listeners. As interpreters, our holy task is to enable communication. This means a target-oriented approach to our work. The audience must understand, otherwise our task has not been completed adequately. The classic example to illustrate this notion is that of a politician speaking to a kindergarten class. It is futile for the interpreter to interpret the politician's text into the same register that he uses. The children will not understand. Therefore the interpreter's task is to adapt the text into a different register and use simpler language in order to enable communication.

Research has shown that as English use continues to conquer the world, the versions of English spoken in different regions are beginning to diverge more and more from the native originals. This is also the case for the *lingua franca* English that has become the generally accepted means of communication in Europe. Differences between European ELF and ENL are not as extreme as those between ENL and the English spoken in other parts of the world. The biggest difficulty that European ELF listeners have in ENL listening comprehension tends not to be semantic or syntactic, but rather prosodic. The reductions in native ENL that occur both in the pronunciation of specific words as well as in the rhythm of full sentences create difficulties of comprehension for ELF listeners. Therefore an ENL interpreter working at a conference with an ELF audience should account for this fact and adapt his/her interpretation accordingly.

In the section on the background literature on the topic, I will first explain the possibility of misunderstanding between ENL and ELF speakers on the level of intercultural communication by delineating the different discourse and linguistic systems of the two

“languages”. I will then bring out some aspects of interpretation theory related to the quality of an interpretation, particularly in respect of the accent of the interpreter. Studies on end-user expectations and judgments of interpretation quality have shown that whereas users don’t give a lot of importance to delivery features in their expectations surveys (claiming, instead, that accuracy and faithfulness to original are of utmost importance), it is just these delivery features that can cause communication to break down in the interpretation act. The question of user comprehension as related to the interpreter’s accent is a delivery feature that has received little attention in interpreting research. My hypothesis is that ELF users will give high qualitative marks to interpreters with native accents. However, their actual comprehension scores will show that their comprehension of an ELF interpreter is higher than that of an ENL interpreter.

To test this hypothesis, I will take two interpretations done in similar settings by interpreters with an equal amount of experience and play them for ELF listeners with an intermediate level of English proficiency. The listeners will receive multiple-choice questions to test their comprehension of the text they are hearing. Afterwards, they will also answer qualitative questions that rate various delivery features. I will then draw conclusions from their responses and relate them to the questions raised in the hypothesis.

After the study, I will make conclusions about the implications of the study for interpreters such as myself. Since I am an oddity (an ENL interpreter working in Estonia where most interpreters are ELF speakers), I hope that I will also be able to make conclusions that are applicable to my ELF colleagues. An aspect of native/non-native accent that is relevant to all interpreters is the question of user confidence in the interpreter. This is an interesting issue to discuss in the conclusion and perhaps one that does not have one,

concrete answer. If my hypothesis is correct, then ELF listeners will prefer the ENL interpreter meaning they will have more confidence in her output. However, if their comprehension of the ELF interpreter is higher, and the interpreter's task is to enable communication (i.e. understanding) then the ideal would be to find a golden mean that works for both ELF and ENL interpreters. If all goes well, my research will arrive at this mean, or at least at the beginning of the road to its discovery.

I will begin the paper by first defining the terms used and the relevance of the problem I've identified. In the background research, I will give an overview of how the use of English has spread throughout the world and highlight the unique aspects of its use as a *lingua franca* in Europe. The spread of a new, communicative language implies contact with pre-existing languages already in use. This contact can lead to instances of miscommunication on the levels of discourse systems as well as linguistic systems. I will look at the potential causes of this miscommunication in the context of the contact between the ENL and ELF systems in Europe. Then I will move on to explore some aspects of interpretation theory. Very little previous research has thus far been done into the question of what effect an interpreter's native/non-native accent has on the end-user. I will summarize the work done with other delivery-related features and show their relevance to the end-user's comprehension levels and quality perception of an interpretation. To begin the chapter on the empirical study, I will recap the background research and show how it informs my hypothesis. This will be followed by an auditory analysis of the two recordings, an ENL interpretation and an ELF interpretation, used in the study. I will explain the methodology, describe the results, and do a full discussion of these results in the light of the research that

has been presented. Only then will I draw the conclusions that I hope will inform not only my own interpretation practice, but also that of my colleagues.

Due to limited access to certain research materials, some researchers and works are cited from the work of other researchers. In such instances, the in-text citations indicate the original source as well as the referring text wherein the information was found and the list of references indicates only the referring text, to which I had actual access.

2. DEFINITION OF TERMS

As this paper deals with the themes of native and non-native uses of English, as well as various denotations of the idea of accent, these terms must first be defined in the context of this work. The question of native versus non-native accent isn't as simple as to say that a native language is learned from birth and a non-native language is acquired later. In this study, the distinction is made between the accent spoken by native speakers in English-speaking countries, here defined as **English as a Native Language** (or ENL) and the communicative language spoken by English speakers elsewhere, or **English as a Lingua Franca** (ELF). This distinction is further addressed in section 3.2. Linguists would make the same distinction by referring to L1 (native) and L2 (non-native) languages. Interpreters use A (native), B (non-native language used for two-way interpretation) and C (non-native language used only as source language) languages to differentiate. For the sake of clarity, only the distinction of ENL versus ELF will be made in this study unless a broader distinction is made, in which case native and non-native accents will be referred to.

It must also be mentioned that, due to the author's personal competence, the native English dealt with in this research is American English. A similar study could very well also be run with British English, or other native varieties.

To be even more specific, one can differentiate between a linguistic accent and a foreign accent, both of which are dealt with in this paper. A **linguistic accent** is the prosodic phenomenon that sets certain syllables apart from the rest of the word and certain words apart from the rest of the sentence using emphasis. A **foreign accent** is the characteristic way in which a subject pronounces the sounds of a learned language. A foreign accent is characterized by its own, unique phonetic, phonological, and prosodic system that differs

from the native version(s) of the language spoken (Mounin, 1974/2002: 2-4). Foreign accents are characterized by the fact that native speakers perceive their pronunciation to be different from their own accent. Later, I will argue that the accents of ELF speakers, as well as different forms of ENL, are also “foreign accents” to speakers of other forms of ENL. Therefore the “foreign” in this term doesn’t necessarily denote someone from another country, but rather from another linguistic system.

3. THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Relevance of the Question Under Investigation

The impetus for this paper came from a real-life situation of interlanguage (and intercultural) miscommunication. Being an ENL speaker in an ELF context, I have often found myself struggling to be understood. I am a native speaker of English. I was born in Estonia, spent the majority of my life in the United States, and studied interpretation for the last two years in Tartu, Estonia. Even though my mother tongue is Estonian, I am more competent in the English language. I classify my English as an ENL because native speakers of English do not perceive me to have a foreign accent in my English utterances. English is also my “A” interpretation language (meaning the stronger, or native language). Native speakers of Estonian do not perceive an accent in my Estonian in everyday conversation, but in high-stress situations such as interpreting acts, my Estonian competence falters and an accent and/or grammatical weaknesses are perceived. Therefore, despite my mother tongue being Estonian, my native tongue is English.

As an interpreter, whose goal is to mediate communication, end-user comprehension should be my first priority. However, interpreting into English is no longer done solely for native speakers of the language. English use has spread and the language has increasingly continued to serve the role of a communication tool, causing the interpreting landscape to change. Pöchhacker (1995: 48) describes an interpreting situation that is becoming more and more common for the contemporary interpreter:

[A] conference, with only two working languages, brought together a total of 413 participants from 40 countries. One third of the participants came from eight countries in which English is the official language, one fifth of them came from German-speaking countries. The rest of the participants came from 29 different countries in which German is of little significance. Thus, four fifths (80%) of the participants would have followed and contributed to the proceedings in English.

In this linguistically vibrant situation, 80% of the participants are ELF speakers. Based on my personal experience, ELF speakers have more difficulty understanding ENL speakers than other ELF speakers. Thus, the question arises whether ELF end-users in an interpreting situation would understand an ELF interpreter better than an ENL interpreter. This is the starting point for the ensuing study, which aims to describe the various aspects of ENL-ELF in-group and inter-group communications, identify the potential difficulties and areas of miscommunication, and provide an empirical basis for conclusions pertaining to the ENL interpreter working in an ELF context as well as for all interpreters who have to work into both their native and non-native languages on a regular basis.

In this section, I will describe the spread of English throughout Europe, which led to the emergence of distinct ELF discourse and linguistic systems. I will present some examples of inter-system miscommunication and make hypotheses as to the causes of these instances of communication breakdown. I will then move on to the world of interpretation theory and explore the repercussions of native/non-native accent on the quality of an interpretation.

3.2 English Use in Europe

The intercultural communication that interpreters mediate can be deemed inter-discourse system communication, as it is not necessarily people from different cultures, but rather from different discourse systems, who are doing the communicating. As Scollon & Scollon (2001: 118) write:

Within a particular discourse system, communications that are framed within another discourse system simply appear faulty or inefficient. One either does not interpret them or one interprets them within the discourse system one is using oneself. This latter problem is the central one of intercultural communication. Intercultural communication is interdiscourse system communication. Communications which cross discourse system lines are subject to being either not heard or misinterpreted.

In this section, I will compare ENL and European ELF (or “Euro-English”). I argue that native English speakers and European ELF speakers communicate in different discourse systems, which can lead to instances of miscommunication when they cross the boundary between these systems. Often, a native English speaker will attempt to (unsuccessfully) understand a non-native on the basis of his or her own discourse system, and vice versa. But this form of subconscious ethnocentrism occurs in the opposite direction as well, as ELF speakers can also attempt to understand an ENL interlocutor on the basis of their own discourse system.

In the 21st century, instead of speaking about English as the official language of certain countries, the use of English has become so widespread that we can speak of World English (also called Global English, International English, Common English, Continental English or General English), or even World Englishes in plural. Kachru (1986) divides the speakers of World Englishes into three, concentric circles - the inner circle, the outer circle, and the expanding circle. Speakers in the inner circle are L1 native speakers who speak ENL (English as a Native Language). Speakers in the outer and expanding circles are L2, or non-native, speakers of English. Jenkins (2003) explains that, for the outer circle, English serves an official function in their everyday activities. The expanding circle, however, are ELF speakers and use the language only as a means of communication between speakers of differing primary languages. Expanding circle English speakers have learned the language as a means of communicating with other non-native English speakers but the language does not serve any intra-country, institutional functions for them.

As they’ve evolved, the non-native forms of English spoken throughout the world have undergone a nativization process that has changed the language by gradually

appropriating it to the context of a different culture and, thus, a new, distinct discourse system. Widdowson (1997: 140) calls a language, like English, that spreads throughout the world a “virtual language” and distinguishes it from “actual” ENL, which, by contrast, is distributed and does not spread on its own. “The distribution of the actual language implies adoption and conformity. The spread of virtual language implies adaptation and nonconformity”. In Europe, despite the European Union’s official policy of linguistic diversity and much debate on the issue, it seems that the quick spreading of English use and learning has made it into a *de facto lingua franca* during recent decades. As English has become de-Americanized and de-Anglicized in Europe, it has adapted by means of “a variety of linguistic processes at formal, contextual, and discorsal levels, e.g., functional allocation, lexicalization, or semantic extension and restriction” (Berns 1995: 6). One example of a change that this has produced is the appropriated use of the word “actual” in Europe to mean “current”, as it does in many European languages (c.f. the Estonian “aktuaalne”) where as in ENL the word means “really in existence”. Europeans have appropriated English as a language of communication by appropriating it to their own sociolinguistic context. They’ve created their own discourse system, a European ELF that is distinct from ENL.

But the global spread of English and the ensuing, adapted ELF forms, also create tension because “distribution denies spread” (Widdowson 1997: 140). As the emergence of ELF discourse systems increases the mutual intelligibility of in-group European interlocutors, European ELF gradually becomes more and more different from ENL, leading to a decrease in mutual intelligibility in ENL-ELF interactions. And as linguistic evolution continues, the various ELF languages around the world cease to be like dialects of English (which are generally mutually intelligible, and regionally-dependent) and become

“something else, [s]omething less continuous and dependent” (Widdowson 1997: 141). Linguists have a difficult time naming these new “languages” appropriately but in the context of intercultural communication, these linguistic varieties can be differentiated as different discourse systems. The conflict between the ENL and European ELF discourse systems is not yet as large as it is between ENL and other ELF versions, such as the ones spoken in some African and Asian countries. But as Widdowson describes, the spread of a language is an evolutionary process so it is quite possible that the future of European ELF will also continue to take it further and further from the classical norms of the world’s native versions of English.

The European example is unique because, unlike other varieties of ELF where English has been appropriated and adapted by one, specific society, European ELF has evolved as an extra-country language that is used as a means of communication between people from different cultures, but within the common social group of Europe. This social group is formed by a historical feeling of European unity, emphasized by the formation of the European Union and its common, internal market. The historical changes of the last decades have led to a sharp increase in the amount of intra-European communication, which, in turn, created the need for a common language and even a common culture of sorts - a European culture. This has led to a common, unified ELF discourse system across the continent despite the number of countries and primary cultures involved. This discourse system becomes increasingly foreign to the ENL speaker.

3.3 Inter-discourse System Miscommunication Across the ENL-ELF Divide

The barrier between the ENL and ELF discourse systems can cause potential miscommunication - whether it be on a textual or sub-textual level. Experiencing this miscommunication can cause frustration. For example, Americans who aren't understood by an ELF listener tend to speak louder or slower to attempt to help the listener. Crystal (1997: 15) acquiesces that "the stereotype of an English tourist repeatedly asking a foreign waiter for tea in a loud 'read my lips' voice is too near the reality to be comfortable". If the listener is still unable to comprehend, the ENL speaker will simply assume that the listener's English is not good enough. Such a situation, where one interlocutor (ENL) speaks a language better than the other (ELF), creates an asymmetrical power relationship, putting the more proficient speaker on a hierarchically higher level in the conversation. The ENL speaker may feel frustration, but for the ELF speaker, this can create feelings of humiliation and discomfort.

On the level of intercultural communication, one reason for miscommunication across the ENL-ELF divide can be a lack of experience. The American on vacation and speaking to the waiter at the cafe is probably engaging in one of the rare moments of inter-discourse system communication that occur in his or her life. When the waiter doesn't understand, the communication falls apart. Scollon & Scollon (2001: 71) point out that, in this situation, "[the listener's] attention [begins] to shift away from the communication of the story, and [comes] to focus more on the conversational partner's discourse capacity. In extreme cases, it is likely that he or she would begin to accuse his or her conversational partner of failing to cooperate, or even of illogicality". The European interlocutor senses this and is made to feel even more uncomfortable than their lower linguistic proficiency has already made them feel.

The problem of intercultural miscommunication can also occur in the opposite direction. Seidlhofer (2001: 136) presents an example that illustrates the difficulties that may occur when the speaker is an ELF interlocutor and the listener is an ENL speaker. The example is quoted from the work of Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas (1999: 29f) :

...[T]he four Danish exceptions to the Maastricht Treaty were hammered out at a summit in Edinburgh in 1991, at the close of which the Danish Foreign Minister referred to the *so-called* Edinburgh agreement, implying that no real obligation had been entered into. (in Seidlhofer 2001: 136, italics mine)

The premodifier “so-called” can have two different meanings in English: “called or designated thus” or “incorrectly called or styled thus”, the latter being an attitudinally-marked use that is more prevalent among ENL speakers. For an ENL listener, the Danish minister’s use of the premodifier “so-called” leads to a conclusion that he is “implying that no real obligation had been entered into.” When, in fact, the minister intended the first definition of the word, which has a counterpart in many other languages (e.g. “nii-nimetatud” in Estonian). The Danish minister “was using English as a *lingua franca* in the way he often has occasion to use it, with interlocutors who use it in the same way” (Seidlhofer 2001: 137). A European listener belonging to the same discourse system would understand that the minister simply spoke of the agreement called the Edinburgh agreement. This case of miscommunication may seem inconsequential, if it weren’t for the fact that the interlocutor in the situation is a diplomat, for whom the nuance and exact meaning of every sentence is of utmost importance to international affairs between countries.

Lingua franca in general, and European ELF in particular, have evolved as communication tools. Surely, Europeans also have very varied levels of English competence. But unlike the American-European example, differing levels of English proficiency within the European ELF discourse system don’t seem to create the same kind of altered power relationships. One explanation is the common, European identity that avoids the creation of a

relationship hierarchy based on language proficiency when the other interlocutor is also European. Linguistically, a *lingua franca* language is based on mutual accommodation, where communicative effectiveness is more important than the aspects of correctness or idiomaticity that are more appraised by an ENL interlocutor (Seidlhofer 2001: 143). Therefore, the relationship between different European ELF interlocutors tends to remain symmetrical unlike the ENL-ELF relationship described above. Communication that crosses the barrier between ENL and ELF discourse systems is more prone to failure than in-group communication.

3.4 Inter-linguistic System Miscommunication Across the ENL-ELF Divide

Every native accent has its own linguistic system. American English differs from British English, which differs from Scottish, Irish, Australian, etc. In addition to its own cultural discourse system, ELF also has its own linguistic system. The literature on teaching English has even gone so far as to suggest that the predominance of ELF use in the world and its mostly being characterized by in-group communication should lead to working towards a general model of acceptable English pronunciation that is disassociated from native forms (Jenkins 1997). This means the creation of ELF pronunciation standards that value ELF as an unique linguistic system. Or, in essence, an ELF form of native English.

Whether ELF is considered a new, native ENL or not, it does have its own linguistic system. Crossing the boundary between linguistic systems creates problems just like crossing the boundary between discourse systems. In-group members don't usually have to make the same effort to understand each other as out-group people. Just like ENL can have more difficulties understanding ELF than other ELF's, Americans often have a difficult time

understanding spoken Scottish or Irish accents. According to the earlier definition of “foreign accent”, we can thus also characterize a Scottish accent as foreign to an American.

An ELF linguistic system is that of an acquired language. The linguistic differences in ELF pronunciation develop as the speaker learns the language. On a phonological level, the reason for the differences is that a language learner attempts to produce the phonemes and allophones of a new linguistic system by basing them on those found in their own system. In other words, they are unable to disassociate the system they are learning from that which they speak. But “disassociation is often necessary because two languages may contain sounds which seem to be the same but are produced by differing articulatory motions. They are therefore acoustically different and may be perceived to be divergent from the target by the [native] listener” (Carey 2009). Moreover, the more similar the phonetic inventory of the speaker’s native language is to that of English, the more difficult it can be to disassociate the sounds of English from their own. “It is a simpler task to learn totally foreign sounds than sounds which bear a resemblance to sounds found in the [speaker’s own native language]” (Carey 2009). As most European languages are more phonetically similar to English than, say, Asian languages, this would even suggest that Europeans would have a harder time achieving perfect, native-like English pronunciation. These differences are perceived by the native listener, who understands the speaker to have a foreign accent. Therefore, a foreign accent is a product of a native speaker’s perception, i.e. of how much the speaker’s pronunciation differs from the native norms, as perceived by native speakers.

Listening comprehension is also difficult across the ENL-ELF barrier. “Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994) have shown that [native speaker] listeners identify words and phrases on the basis of their stress patterns, first picking out the stressed syllable, and then searching

their mental lexicons on the basis of this syllable” whereas “[non-native speakers] listen more for contextual cues when differentiating similar nouns and verbs” (in Carey 2009). ELF speakers don’t produce the correct stressed elements, thus making it difficult for ENL to understand their utterances. ENL listeners are listening for the stressed elements. When these are missing or misplaced, comprehension is hindered. ELF listeners, however, look for familiar words in ENL speech. When the speech is rather a series of stressed and reduced elements, the ELF listener becomes confused because they are unable to distinguish words, only syllables.

Before commencing this study, I consulted two, independent experts on their opinion of what creates the most difficulties in producing and comprehending English for language learners. Krista Vogelberg is a professor at the University of Tartu with extensive experience in Estonians’ use of English. Rebekah Armstrong is an English teacher with over five years of experience teaching English pronunciation to foreigners in North and South America. Both brought out the same element as causing the most difficulty in pronunciation and listening comprehension for English learners - the issue of reductions. Reductions are a prosodic stress phenomenon wherein certain syllables or words are accented, or emphasized, at the expense of others, which are reduced to accommodate the stress. In English, vowels are reduced in unstressed syllables and whole words are reduced in sentences. Accented words in English sentences also have “nuclear stress”, meaning they are emphasized at the expense of other words in order to bring out the meaning of the sentence (Carey 2009). Non-native listeners have a difficult time producing and comprehending the stressed/unstressed elements.

Empirical studies have also confirmed that prosody plays a primary role in the perception of foreign accents by native speakers (de Mareüil and Vieru-Dimulescu 2006). In the linguistics of prosody, a distinction is made between stress-timed languages and syllable-timed languages (Nooteboom 1997: 663). English is classically considered a stress-timed language, meaning that sequences of stressed syllables are emphasized and unstressed syllables are reduced to compensate so that the intervals of stressed and unstressed syllables are of equal length. Estonian is considered a syllable-timed language, meaning that all of the syllables are equally long (Asu and Nolan 2006). Though this distinction has been called into question throughout the literature, it is clear that the reductions present in English are not found in Estonian. Additionally, “other things being equal, lexically stressed syllables are often considerably longer than lexically unstressed syllables, although this difference itself depends much on position within word and phrase” (Nooteboom 1997: 662). English utterances are made in groups of words wherein syllables can be stressed or unstressed, reduced or unreduced depending on their position. This is what creates the meaning in the phrase for a native speaker. Knowing where to position the stress in a phrase is instinctual to the native speaker and a very difficult prosodic element for the non-native to acquire. Therefore, an ELF interpreter’s tendency to misplace or avoid stressed elements in an utterance could create confusion for the native end-user, who identifies the meaning of words or utterances based on the location of stress. For an ELF end-user, however, the more drawn out, less reduced ELF interpretation is easier to follow because it makes it easier to distinguish the words and nouns that he/she listens for to create meaning. The fact that different linguistic systems also have their different prosodic systems is another important causal factor of ENL-ELF inter-linguistic system miscommunication.

Linguistic and prosodic systems which can cause miscommunication across group boundaries remain accessible to in-group speakers. ENL may have difficulties understanding ELF utterances, and vice versa, that aren't shared by in-group members. Because an ELF listener has a similar tendency to accentuation and word-based utterance-forming as another ELF speaker, their mutual understanding is higher. They are part of the same system. The particularity of the European ELF is that these systems aren't based on one native language, but on a group of languages. Therefore, an argument can also be made for experience enhancing comprehension of a foreign linguistic system. Europeans are used to speaking to Europeans and thus understand each other. Americans who spend a lot of time in Europe are also more familiar with the European ELF and thus their comprehension is heightened. The European ELF linguistic system has evolved through extended contact and miscommunication from out-group members can also be avoided with experience.

3.5 Aspects of Interpretation Quality

As a professional communicator, an interpreter must aim to be loyal to the discourse, linguistic, and prosodic systems of both the speaker as well as the listener as she/he mediates communication between the two.

As target-language recipients are people with diverse social and cultural backgrounds, the interpreter, in shaping the message for the target audience, often cannot do without intercultural communicative competence and at least some knowledge of the communicative conventions prevalent in the respective cultures. (Puusepp 2003: 22)

As Scollon & Scollon (2001) point out, the smoothness of discourse determines the insiders and outsiders of an interaction and loyalty to the listener also means that the interpreter does everything possible to make the listener part of the in-group. One of the many aspects of the diverse social and cultural backgrounds of a listener is their discourse and linguistic system.

As I've explained above, in the case of interpretation into English in the European context, this means *either* the ENL or ELF system. To ensure a quality interpretation, an interpreter must be aware of this difference and adjust his/her interpretation accordingly. But a quality interpretation means a lot more than just accounting for the difference in discourse systems of the speaker and end-user. There are many pertinent aspects of interpretation quality at play in achieving the best result possible. In the following discussion, I will look at some of these aspects that are pertinent to the question of whether the interpreter has a native or non-native English accent.

Studies on interpretation quality date back to the beginnings of research on interpretation theory. In some ways, they've evolved over time, accounting for increasingly more factors of the interpreting act as time passes. Nonetheless, there seems to be some consistency in the quality criteria used throughout this time. The first comprehensive interpreting quality survey of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) members was done in 1986 by Bühler. Out of her 16 quality criteria, nine were related to the interpretation output and the rest dealt with the interpreter's professionalism as a whole. The output-related criteria were:

- native accent
- pleasant voice
- fluency
- logical cohesion
- sense consistency
- completeness
- correct grammar
- correct terminology
- appropriate style

These nine criteria are split fairly evenly between semantic and pragmatic, or delivery-related criteria (Bühler 1986: 234). The most recent survey of AIIC interpreters was conducted by

Zwischenberger and Pöchhacker in 2008 (Zwischenberger and Pöchhacker 2010). Despite the twenty years that passed between the two surveys, the only additional aspects of quality tested were lively intonation and synchronicity. This consistency in the criteria tested seems to suggest a long-standing consensus on the criteria governing interpretation quality.

The aim of both surveys of AIIIC interpreters was to glean an opinion from interpreting professionals, themselves, as to what they consider to be the most important aspects to ensuring a quality interpretation. Following Bühler's methodology, Zwischenberger and Pöchhacker's survey questioned 704 interpreters with 4-57 years interpreting experience and asked them to rate the criteria on a scale of importance from very important to unimportant for a high-quality interpretation. Not surprisingly, of the delivery-related factors, only fluency was rated highly (70.7% found it very important) whereas below 30% found intonation and pleasant voice to be very important and only 14.1% found native accent to be very important. In fact, 43.8% of the respondents rated native accent to be either less important or unimportant (Zwischenberger and Pöchhacker 2010).

Several respondents made comments suggesting that the importance of native accent is target language-dependent. Respondent 338 commented: "speakers of languages other than English are often intolerant of non-native accents." Moreover, in the case of interpretation into English, respondents described a higher level of leniency on the part of the end-user due to the prevalence of different versions of English used in the world. Respondent 550 said: "the native accent is more important when going into French than when going into English, where more flavors of English are customary." Native accent was also related to prosodic quality by Respondent 137: "native accent threw me, because if it was only accent it would be less important, but it is invariably associated with native intonation, which is essential to

meaning” (Zwischengerger and Pöchhacker 2010). As far as interpreters are concerned, the question of native versus non-native accent is a context-specific issue. Nonetheless, their comments on the differences between English and other languages regarding a desired accent are very telling of the situation of ELF spread throughout Europe described in section 3.2.

Quality surveys that only question interpreters provide less than half of the picture, as the number of interested parties involved in an act of interpretation is much larger. Another group often surveyed for their opinions on interpretation quality is the end-user. Surveys show that end-users’ expectations tend to be slightly lower than those of interpreters (who, after all, aspire to their best, professional level). However, the general order of importance of the criteria has mostly been the same between interpreters and users (Kurz 2001: 406). An important differentiation to be made is that between end-users’ expectations and evaluations. Marrone (1993) attempted to separate users expectations before an interpreting event and their responses afterwards and found that “users seem to attach far more importance to substance, fidelity and completeness of information than to the linguistic quality or the prosodic features of interpretation” (in Kurz 2001: 400). However, at the same time, end-users consider “ease of understanding” to be the most important factor in a quality interpretation (Ng 1992 in Kurz 2001: 399). This seems to indicate that end-users equate understanding with complete and accurate information, not with how that information is prosodically presented.

And yet, studies on end-users’ reactions to delivery-related features have shown quite the opposite trend. When responding to delivery-related aspects of an interpretation, end-users’ qualitative opinions are emotionally charged, which tends to cloud over more concrete considerations of actual comprehension. Users tend to base their opinions on how it feels to

listen to an interpretation and not on what they glean from the message. As Shlesinger (1997: 127) states, “when the delivery of interpretation is smooth, it may create a false impression of high quality even when much of the message may in fact be distorted or missing”. A study by Collados Aís (1998) clearly describes the chasm between user expectations, user assessments, and the actual quality of an interpretation (based on the implicit goal of successfully mediating a communicative act). Collados Aís (1998: 336) compared expectations and assessments of speeches with monotonous delivery and melodious delivery, introducing errors of sense consistency into one recording with melodious delivery. She found that end-users preferred a melodious delivery over a monotonous one despite the mistakes. What’s more, her results “show a clear separation between quality and the perceived quality or success of a simultaneous interpretation”. Users expectations indicated that sense consistency is one of the most important factors in a simultaneous interpretation, but their assessments favored the melodious delivery over any other factor. Collados Aís (1998: 336) concludes that “users are not good judges of quality, simply because they are not in a position to perform this task.” Their expectations are related to quality, but “not to the actual perception of quality or success”.

In comparison to expectation surveys, where end-users claimed substance, fidelity and completeness of information to be their biggest considerations, Collados Aís’s results confirm that it is particularly the delivery-related features that end-users tend to underestimate, despite the fact that they are more affected by them than they realize. In certain cases, problems with delivery-related features can be the making or breaking of an interpretation. An incomprehensible accent or a tediously monotonous voice may affect a user’s experience more than a sentence with incorrect grammar where the meaning comes

through. Non-verbal features vary across the board, depending on the type of interpreting act and context. “Gold (1973: 155) stresses the need to target the language to the expectations of the audience: interpreters should try to use the same variety of a language as the participants do” (in Kurz 2001: 395). It might also be added that, in addition to the expectations of the audience, their comprehension needs should also be considered. And this includes the question of whether the interpreter is speaking in a comprehensible accent or not. As surveys of interpreters indicated, expectations regarding native or non-native accent in interpretation are language-specific. For the end-user, the issue should also be comprehension-driven as an incomprehensible or difficult to follow accent could cause communication breakdown in the interpreting act.

End-user surveys have several limitations. For one, the subjects are most often inexperienced consumers of interpretation services who “are not necessarily aware of interpreter roles and goals” (Kalina 2005: 32). Therefore it is questionable whether there is very much meaning in quality criteria like “logical cohesion” or “completeness” for an end-user. In her comment on Bühler’s 1986 survey, Seleskovitch (1986: 236) brings out weaknesses in the wording of questions which affect even the interpreter-respondent’s understanding of what the given criteria mean. For example, “completeness” is an unclear criterion - does it mean that not a single word has been left out (an usually undesirable word-for-word interpretation) or some form of immeasurable completeness of meaning? Seleskovitch (1986: 236) points out that even “correct grammar” can be a questionable quality consideration, as minor grammatical errors “are not even noticed by those who are listening for substance”. At the same time, it seems obvious that a criterion like “fluency” is highly important and seems to supersede all the other criteria since correct grammar and a

logical delivery without fluency make for a very poor interpretation. In other words, interpreters may understand the criteria given in a survey, but the meaning of each criterion may remain ambiguous and be understood differently by each respondent (Seleskovitch 1986: 236). Seleskovitch's comments are not meant to diminish the importance of Bühler's work, but rather to emphasize the need for a large and varied corpus of information before any definitive conclusions are reached. The consistency of criteria between Zwischengerger and Pöchhacker's 2008 survey and Bühler's pioneering 1986 work is susceptible to criticism in light of this ambiguity of terminology. And if the criteria cause confusion for an interpreter, it would be a lot to ask of a group of end-users to have an unequivocally similar understanding of what aspects of an interpretation they are being asked to judge. Therefore it is important that the wording of quality criteria be simple and accessible yet also specific enough to elicit the desired information. Research into interpreting quality would be greatly aided if a universal set of criteria and set of surveys were developed, but as Kahane (2000) acquiesces, this is a very difficult process due to the large number of parties and interests involved. And yet, "[t]he development of a wider body of research, or the mere opening of a debate on quality would shed light on this key issue, which until now has been obscured by a consensus that recognises its importance but lacks substance" (Kahane 2000).

In addition to not knowing exactly which aspects of an interpretation they are being asked to judge, the end-user may not be aware of the limitations that other quality criteria may have on their comprehension of an interpreted text. It is one thing to consider whether a user enjoys listening to an interpretation, but another whether that user actually comprehends the content of the message. Comprehension tests rarely accompany user evaluation surveys of interpretations. Of the few surveys attempting to fill this gap, "Shelsinger (1994) studied

the effect of interpretational intonation on comprehension and recall and ... Pöschhacker (1994) called for quality assessment based on investigating the cognitive end result, i.e. how well the listener had understood the message conveyed” (in Kurz, 2001: 397). But as Kurz (2001: 397) states, this is “a line of research that deserves to be further pursued”. With the end-goal of an act of interpreting being to convey meaning and ensure communication, I would argue that the question of how well the listener understands the message supersedes all other considerations. This isn’t to say, of course, that user expectations and opinions are unimportant, as they are the clients. But rather, that adding comprehension tests to subjective survey-based studies would perhaps give a more complete understanding of interpretation quality - where both user demands as well as the demands of comprehension can be addressed simultaneously.

The question of an interpreter’s accent is a delivery-related feature that can affect end-user comprehension immensely. Research has been done into the effect of the target text speaker’s accent on interpreter’s comprehension and processing time, but little attention has been given to the interpreter’s accent vis-à-vis the end-user’s comprehension level. A branch of interpreting research where the issue of the perception of a native accent is acute is that of directionality. This is the question of whether an interpreter should work into the *retour* (i.e. a non-native language) or not. Just like preference for native accent is language-specific, the two major schools of thought on whether interpreters should work into their non-native language or not are divided geographically. Namely, Western Europe has traditionally favored working only into the native language whereas Russia and Eastern Europe have promoted, if not favored, working out of the native language. In certain cases, such as France, the language-specific preference goes hand-in-hand with the country’s linguistic

policies in general. The Russian school, however, has traditionally favored complete comprehension of source speech over superior ability to produce target text. As far as Eastern Europe, the *retour* question becomes a mute point as interpreters working in these countries have no other option but to work both into and out of their native language for lack of enough qualified interpreters who are native speakers of other languages and who also understand their language (Martin 2005).

Despite the polemical debates over the issue, the research into *retour* has shown that the question of native versus non-native accent is ultimately one that troubles interpreters, themselves, much more than end-users. In fact, for a long time, the interpreting community placed a professional stigma on working into a language with a foreign accent. Unlike quality surveys, *retour* research shows that end-users, on the other hand, have concurrently been much more concerned about their ability to understand and use the information transmitted than with the particular accent of the interpreter doing the transmitting (Martin 2005).

The case of ELF is, once again, unique because of the spread and preponderant use of the language throughout the world, and consequently also at many international events and conferences. In addition to sharing their own particular in-group ELF language, the delegates attending a conference, particularly if they are from the same field, share an in-group culture. Linguistically, this means that they may be much more proficient in the English of their field than in general, everyday English. On the level of discourse systems, “the concept of ‘culture’ in the business context can therefore be redefined on the basis of a reduced (restricted) set of behaviour patterns and experiences held in common by the addressees” (Adab 2005: 233). On one hand, this means a higher tolerance among ELF end-users for non-native English interpretations, together with their accent, grammatical mistakes, and syntactic

oddities. On the other hand, it also means that it is “easier for the [ELF end-users] to follow the pun-free, more explicit, less metaphorical and less idiomatic English version of a non-native interpreter than that of an English native interpreter who delves in the linguistic abundance of his/her mother tongue” (Kalina 2005: 41). Familiarity with a linguistic system governs listener comprehension. So in that light, a native speaker interpreter may not always be the ideal. And with a common language at their disposal, delegates may even prefer the foreign (to an ENL), but familiar (to them) sounds of an ELF interpreter.

Familiarity with a native or non-native linguistic system comprises not only of native/non-native accent, but also other semantic and syntactic aspects of language use. One aspect governing the familiarity of the target text produced by an interpreter is the coping strategies used while producing the text. Bartlomiejczyk (2006) looked at the difference in coping strategies used by interpreters working into their native and non-native languages in English-Polish and Polish-English interpretations. Among the strategies that she identified, Bartlomiejczyk hypothesized that the strategies of transfer (transfer of words) and transcodage (transfer of syntax) would be used more when working into the foreign language than into the native language, because the influence of the native language on the foreign one should be stronger than vice-versa. Her study showed, however, that this is not the case and that the influence goes both ways. One of the possible reasons for this is the influence of English on other languages, which can be so strong that interpreters will even resort to “instant naturalization” (a term adopted by Gile in 1995), meaning they will import an English word into Polish even when it is not used because they assume it will not sound strange due to the large number of English words already used in Polish. Bartlomiejczyk’s

results show that a foreign language, particularly a *lingua franca* like English can influence an interpreter's native language output just as much as vice versa (Bartłomiejczyk 2006).

The unique elements of a spoken utterance produced in a certain linguistic system are found on the level of syllables, words, and concepts. In a study conducted at Tartu University, Tšursin (2006) studied the effect of the prosodic features of changes in speed and intonation on simultaneous interpretations. She codified the faster and slower moments and changes in intonation in a source speech and used these to analyze student interpreted target texts, bringing out the coping mechanisms that the interpreters used to reproduce stressed elements in the original text. Tšursin's results showed that novice interpreters' tend to give more attention to the elements that are stressed by intonation or speed in the source text. This can lead to the target text having excessive verbal amplification of stressed elements, the sacrifice of syntax for the sake of guarding stress, an attempt to copy stressed elements despite lack of understanding (using approximation or substitution as coping mechanisms), and little to no attention being given to unstressed elements leading to their interpretation being poorer. She also found that high speed exacerbated the problems even more. Tšursin's research also shows that novice interpreters tend to speak at a more monotonous tone than professional interpreters, which is one of the reasons why they need to use verbal coping mechanisms to make up for the lack of stress and intonation in their voices (Tšursin 2006). Her work indicates that excessive focus on syntactically stressed elements can lead to a decrease in interpretation quality. A tendency to attribute excessive importance to transfer of stressed elements from the source text may also carry over into an ELF interpreter excessively stressing words in sentences based on their own linguistic system. An ENL speaker uses nuclear stress to emphasize certain words in a sentence and give meaning. An

ELF interpreter may rather attribute this stress to words based on where that stress would lie in the source language and not where it would naturally occur for a native speaker, thereby inhibiting the native speaker's accurate comprehension of the speech.

Despite seeming consensus on what qualities should be assessed in a quality interpretation, as research into the field increases, the concept becomes increasingly more evasive. The question of a native or non-native accent has received little attention throughout the research, perhaps becoming the most acute in questions of interpreting into the retour. Nevertheless, few studies have undertaken to explore aspects concretely related to a native accent. Many researchers do acquiesce that with the spread of an English *lingua franca* and the varied levels of English language proficiency among delegates using English interpretations, there is much more leniency towards non-native English accents than for other languages, such as French.

Nonetheless, the abundant research into interpretation quality seems to have achieved one consensus - an ideal interpretation can only be achieved if there is ample cooperation between all of the parties involved in the interpreting act. Vuorikoski (1998: 193) very eloquently describes the need for communication in conference interpreting settings:

[C]ollaboration is needed between all the parties involved in order to reach a communicative situation that is satisfying to all the parties involved. Communication could be enhanced if the speakers, and the organizers, too, understand the special demands of the situation. In an ideal situation each actor is aware of the others' roles and takes them into consideration. If each actor is sufficiently informed about the situation, the topic, and the predominant expectations of the other actors, the resulting performance by the interpreters, i.e. the interpreter's text, will be informed as well, and the overall quality will be closer to the users' needs and expectations. Thus, while there is a great deal of diversity among the [simultaneous interpretation] users' needs and expectations, some unity will be introduced by the shared information and background knowledge of all the parties in the communicative situation.

The quality of an interpretation is contingent on contributions from all of the parties involved. On the part of the end-user, ultimate quality is reached when the message is understood.

4. EMPIRICAL STUDY

4.1 Hypothesis

I've argued that miscommunication across the ENL-ELF barrier is more frequent than in in-group communication. ELF speakers have difficulty reproducing the prosodic system of ENL speech, and also with listening comprehension of utterances spoken by ENL speakers. Their own systems are more familiar to them, so they have less difficulty understanding the prosodic patterns of an ELF speaker. I've also shown that interpretation quality is judged based on emotional response more than on actual levels of comprehension by the end-users, despite the fact that problematic, delivery-related features can cause a communication breakdown in an interpreting event. I've also shown that the question of whether an interpreter has a native or a non-native accent is a context-driven and language-specific issue and that the coping strategies of transfer and transcoding are used when working into both native and non-native languages. All of these factors show that the role of a native accent for an interpretation is a very complex issue, as are all aspects of interpretation quality. Nonetheless, based on my own experience, I have found that in situations of everyday communication, the ENL-ELF divide can become large enough to become a barrier to communication. Therefore, I conjecture that ELF end-users will have comprehension difficulties with target texts produced by an ENL interpreter, or at least more difficulties than listening to an ELF target text. Based on my experience and the literature, the hypothesis that impels the ensuing empirical study is that ELF end-users with an average level of English proficiency will rate an ENL interpretation higher than an ELF interpretation, particularly on the basis of delivery-related features like native accent, but that they will

actually understand the ELF interpretation better, as evidenced by the results of comprehension questions about the message.

4.2 Analysis of ENL and ELF Recordings

In this section, I will describe the recordings used for the study and do a precursory analysis, based on the background literature and a discussion with English teacher Rebekah Armstrong, of some of the prosodic elements that differentiate their native and non-native accents.

For the study, I took two authentic recordings of interpretations into English. The first is an ENL interpretation (for which I am the interpreter) on the topic of the Copenhagen Climate Conference and the second is an ELF interpreter (working into *retour*, i.e. her non-native language) and on the topic of small technological solutions to large problems. The ENL recording is 6.36 minutes long and the ELF recording is 6.56 minutes long. Both are interpreting students and made the recordings during the end of their third semester of study. The source texts for the interpretations are of equal difficulty and develop an equal number of themes with examples. The recordings were made in a classroom setting. It is also important to note, particularly since I use my own recording for the study, that both recordings were done before this study began and before the interpreters knew that the recording would later be used for this study. The transcriptions of the recordings can be found in Appendices A and B and the .mp3 audio files are included in a CD-ROM at the back of this thesis.

An analysis of the recordings of the ENL and ELF interpretations shows that there are definite prosodic differences between the two recordings that indicate that the ELF

interpreter speaks English with a foreign accent. As discussed in section 3.4, one reason that ELF utterances are more accessible to ELF listeners is because of their similar approach to stressed and unstressed elements. ELF speakers don't make the same reductions as would be made in native speech. For example, in the ELF recording, the interpreter pronounces the word "medical" as "me-di-cul" whereas a more native pronunciation would be "med-uh-cul". And the word "Africa" is pronounced "Af-ri-cuh" in the ELF interpretation and not "Af-ruh-cuh" as it would be in ENL. The vowels in the mid-word syllables "di" and "ri" are reduced to something like an "uh" sound in native speech, but the ELF interpreter pronounces their non-reduced versions. The ENL recording, however, words like "se-cu-ruh-ty" and "ac-com-muh-da-shun" have reduced vowels as characteristic of a native accent. Reductions make listening comprehension difficult for ELF listeners, which implies that the ELF listeners will have an easier time understanding the ELF recording than the ENL recording.

Based on Tšursin's (2006) research, I conjectured that student interpreters may excessively amplify stressed elements in their target text based on where the stress would fall in their source language. Carey (2009) explained that native speakers identify words and phrases on the basis of stressed syllables so they produce utterances in phrasal chunks, not as separate words. A phrase, such as "technological solutions" would be grouped together in a native utterance with the most stressed element being the syllable "lu" so that the listener would hear "technologicalsoLUtions". The ELF interpreter separates the two words and puts emphasis on one syllable in each one, leading to "technoLOGical soLUtions". The ELF interpreter seems to transfer the accented elements from the original Estonian, where both words in "tehnOLOOgilised LAhendused" have separate, stressed syllables. For a native listener, repeated emphasis of syllables in each word makes it difficult to distinguish the

word with nuclear stress in the sentence, thereby also making it difficult to draw out the meaning. For a non-native listener, the ENL interpreter's lack of stressed syllables in each word makes the phrase run together and the individual words more difficult to distinguish.

Aspects of intonation also distinguish the native ENL and non-native ELF recordings. Nooteboom (1997: 648) explains that "intonation is organized in terms of melodic patterns that are recognizable to native speakers of the language". Native speakers of English tend to mark the end of a thought with falling intonation so listeners can distinguish chunks of message. The ENL interpreter does this much more than the ELF interpreter. Also, native speakers draw out the last syllable of a word if there is more of the sentence coming in order to indicate that the thought is not completed. This is also an aspect that is present in the ENL but not ELF recording. Examples of these traits are marked in the following excerpts from the transcriptions of the ENL and ELF recordings used for the study (found in Appendices A and B, recordings found on CD-ROM at the back of the study).

ENL interpretation: But at the same time, since I live in Copenhagen, I thought I would tell you a little about how this climate conference is taking place [*drawn out syllable "plaaace" followed by pause*] and what the Danish media has been writing about it - about the practical sides [*drawn out syllable "siiides" followed by pause*] and about what the Danish say about it amongst themselves [*falling intonation at end*]. (Appendix A, lines 4-7)

ELF interpretation: So I'll tell you about small technological solutions [*neutral intonation, followed by pause*] that have solved big problems and very successfully [*ends with neutral intonation*]. (ELF recording, Appendix B, lines 3-4)

The lack of a drawn out syllable before a pause and the neutral intonation at the end of the phrase make it difficult for a native speaker to differentiate this as one (not two) complete thought(s). An ELF end-user, however, listens for contextual clues to build meaning (Carey 2009), so these shortcomings should not be as big of a hindrance for comprehension.

This analysis has identified some of the prosodic differences between the ENL and ELF recordings, which may create difficulties of comprehension for out-group listeners. Of

course, this analysis is very cursory. Since the recordings under scrutiny are different texts, there are a lot more variables than just native or non-native accent at play in their production and their comparison can only lead to conjectures. A complete and thorough prosodic analysis would require the recordings to be based on the exact same text. Such an analysis is also beyond the scope of this study. However, this analysis does show that the ENL and ELF interpretations contain prosodic differences that could become hindrances to communication for a listener from a different linguistic system.

4.3 Research Method

In the study, the ENL and ELF recordings were played for respondents, who filled out a survey of comprehension and opinion questions. 61 respondents participated in the study. They were later split into four groups based on their level of English and native language. There were two groups of intermediate level English students, one group composed of native speakers and one group of pre-intermediate level students. The respondents were taken from English classes to ensure a fairly equal level of English proficiency within each group. The native speaker group and the pre-intermediate level English group were tested to control the effect of the level of English proficiency on the results. The intermediate level English students included Estonians and non-Estonians. The group of non-Estonians was tested to control whether the results can be applied to a larger, pan-European context.

The groups were categorized as follows: Group A (7 respondents) is respondents whose native language is Estonian and who are learning English at the pre-intermediate level. Group B (32 respondents) is respondents whose native language is Estonian and who are learning English at the intermediate level, Group C (15 respondents) is respondents whose

native languages are not Estonian and who are learning English at the intermediate level. Group D (7 respondents) is composed of respondents whose native language is American English.

Both of the two recordings were played for the groups of respondents. After listening to each recording, the groups were asked to fill out separate surveys (see Appendix C). The surveys had two sections: the first was composed of content-related questions that tested how well the listeners understood the message. In writing the questions, an attempt was made to be as specific as possible so as to test acquired knowledge, but at the same time not too detailed so as to account for the limitations of short-term memory. The second section was composed of open-ended opinion questions that asked the listeners to evaluate the interpreter, identify how well they understood the interpretation, describe what factors helped/hindered their comprehension, and finally to indicate whether they thought the interpreter was a native speaker of English or not. Groups B, C, and D were also given a list of linguistic and delivery-related criteria (including speed, word choice, sentence structure, pronunciation, accent, and rhythm) and asked to indicate which ones helped and which ones hindered their comprehension. The criteria were worded in a way as to be as accessible to the end-user as possible while also eliciting responses on linguistic aspects that are related to accent. When possible, the surveys were followed by a short interview with the whole group, including questions regarding preference of one interpretation over the other and reasons for the preference. This information supplemented the findings of the survey and allowed for some quite informative, spontaneous responses. However, as the interviews were spontaneous and not recorded, then the information garnered was used merely to supplement the qualitative

findings of the survey. In total, the recordings were played for seven different groups of respondents.

For each group, the means of the results of the comprehension questions for the ENL and ELF recordings were compared and then analyzed with a t-test to find out whether the differences between scores are statistically significant. The responses to the qualitative survey questions were compiled and analyzed within each group. Where possible, the respondent's indicated preferences for the ENL or ELF recording were also compiled. Some respondents indicated this preference on their surveys even though this distinction was not directly solicited. Since not all of the respondents elected to answer each question, the analyses of each answer only account for those respondents who answered that particular question. In the quantitative analysis of the comprehension question, the total number of respondents from each group who chose to answer the questions is indicated.

4.4 Results

4.4.1 Statistics

Table 1 gives some general statistics on the four groups of respondents. In the non-Estonian group, the respondents' native languages were distributed as follows: 1 Czech, 1 French, 1 Hungarian, 2 Italians, 1 Latvian, 2 Polish, 5 Russians, 1 Spanish, and 1 Udmurt.

Table 1 shows that the respondents are mostly university age (except for Group A) with a high predominance for females (except for Group D). All of the groups have respondents from both the humanities and sciences, with Group B having the largest imbalance of more respondents from the humanities than sciences (though 10 respondents did not indicate their specialty).

Group	A	B	C	D	TOTALS
Level of English	Pre-Intermediate	Intermediate	Intermediate	Native	N/A
Number of Respondents	7	32	15	7	61
Native Language	6 Estonians 1 Russian	Estonian	Non-Estonian	English	N/A
Mean Age	35,3	21,6	24,8	27,9	27,4
Male/Female Ratio	7 Females	4 Males 28 Females	1 Male 14 Females	5 Males 2 Females	10 Males 51 Females
Specialty	3 Humanities 3 Sciences 1 Unknown	16 Humanities 6 Sciences 10 Unknown	6 Humanities 5 Sciences 4 Unknown	5 Humanities 2 Sciences	30 Humanities 16 Sciences 15 Unknown

Table 1. General statistics on respondent groups

4.4.2 Comprehension Questions

Responses to the comprehension questions were checked for right and wrong answers. In situations where more than one answer was given, the answer was considered incorrect even if the correct answer was also marked. Unanswered questions were considered incorrect. In cases where all of the comprehension questions were not answered, the respondents were omitted from this section of the analysis. Some respondents chose not to answer whereas others perhaps didn't know the answers. Thus all of the unanswered results were omitted because it is impossible to know the reason that each respondent didn't answer. The total resulting number of respondents who answered the comprehension questions was 57. Table 2 shows the number of respondents who answered and the means of the results of the comprehension questions for each group.

Group	ELF mean (m_{ELF})	ENL mean (m_{ENL})	$m_{ELF}-m_{ENL}$
A - Pre-Intermediate (5 respondents)	2,000	4,000	-2,000
B - Intermediate, Estonians (31 respondents)	4,323	4,097	0,226
C - Intermediate, Non-Estonians (15 respondents)	4,000	3,533	0,467
D - Native Speakers (6 respondents)	4,833	4,500	0,333

Table 2. Results for comprehension questions by group

A comparison of the means of the results achieved by each group shows that all of the groups got slightly better scores on the comprehension questions for the ELF recording than for the ENL recording, except for Group A. However, the results from Group A must be omitted from this analysis and the group considered an outlier because the members of Group A listened to the ENL recording and answered the questions before listening to the ELF recording. But once it was time to answer the comprehension questions for the ELF recording, the group said they were too tired of having to listen to recordings in English and answer questions and were unable to continue. Therefore, not all of the respondents answered all of the questions and their results on the ELF comprehension questions were correspondingly low. The respondents blamed their insufficient English proficiency and lack of experience listening to texts of such length for their fatigue. The group did answer the qualitative questions so their results were primarily useful for that analysis. Nonetheless, the differences between the mean scores seem to indicate that Groups B, C, and D comprehended the ELF recording slightly better than the ENL recording.

Since a comparison of the means from each group indicates that the groups' comprehension of the ELF recording was higher than the ENL recording, a t-test analysis was run on the results to see if this difference can be considered statistically significant by conventional standards. The results of the t-test analyses are shown in Table 3.

Group	m_{ELF} - m_{ENL}	t-test Result (p)
A	-2	0,013
B	0,226	0,341
C	0,467	0,193
D	0,333	0,260

Table 3. Results of t-test analysis

The t-test analysis compares the means of the results that each group had for the ELF recording against the means of their results for the ENL recording. The analysis gives the significance of the difference between the means as a value “p” (Lowry 1999-2008). By the conventional standards of sociological and linguistic research, a statistically significant result must be at or above the level ,05 or 95%. The results of the t-test analysis show that only the p-value for Group A is statistically significant at ,013 or 98,7%. However, since Group A is an outlier, as explained above, these results are irrelevant. The differences between the mean scores are insignificant by traditional standards for all of the other groups. Thus, even though their mean scores are slightly higher for the ELF recording, the quantitative analysis shows that the groups' comprehension of the two interpreters was more or less equal.

The statistical significance of data is affected by the size of the population measured. The groups participating in this study were small by statistical standards. It is possible that if larger groups of respondents were studied, more noticeable trends would emerge. The

following sections analyze the responses to the qualitative data to see whether they confirm or deny the quantitative analysis.

4.4.3 Question 1 - Level of Comprehension

Question 1 asked Groups B, C and D to indicate how easy it was to understand the text. Table 4 shows the responses as percentages of the number of respondents from the respective group who chose to answer this question.

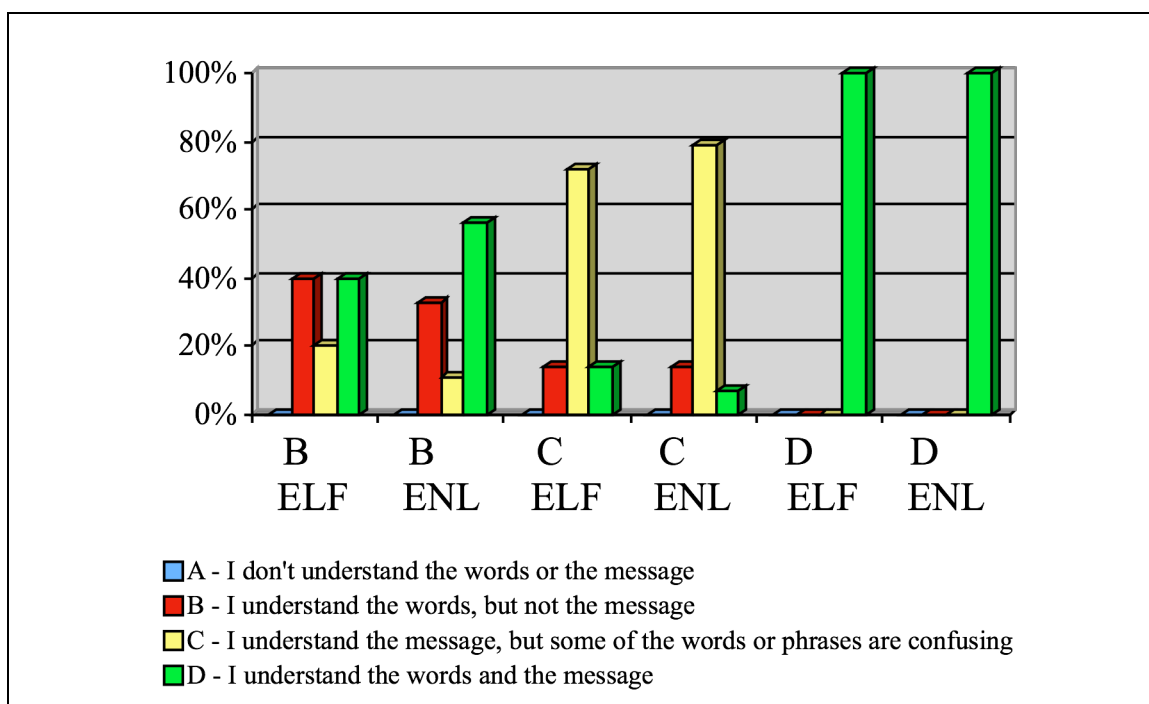


Table 4. Answers to Question 1, by group, as percent of responses

In Group B, the responses were mostly split for both recordings between “I understand the words but not the message” and “I understand the words and the message” with a few respondents also answering “I understand the message, but some of the words or phrases are confusing”. For Group C, both recordings predominantly elicited the “I understand the message, but some of the words or phrases are confusing” response. Group D only responded “I understand the words and the message” for both the ENL and ELF recordings. This data

indicates that Estonians tended to have more trouble assembling a total meaning out of the words that they heard and non-Estonians had difficulties with specific words or phrases.

4.4.4 Question 2 - Factors that Helped or Hindered Comprehension

In question 2, Groups B, C, and D were also asked to indicate the factors that they perceived to help or hinder their comprehension. The number of respondents from the group who indicated each factor to help or hinder is shown in Table 5.

Group B - 32 respondents				
	ELF		ENL	
	Helped	Hindered	Helped	Hindered
Speed	6	14	11	8
Word Choice	14	7	12	5
Sentence Structure	11	5	10	7
Pronunciation	15	4	18	1
Accent	8	7	11	4
Rhythm	5	14	8	11
Group C - 15 respondents				
	ELF		ENL	
	Helped	Hindered	Helped	Hindered
Speed	8	4	10	5
Word Choice	10	3	9	2
Sentence Structure	3	7	4	5
Pronunciation	11	2	9	2
Accent	6	4	5	7
Rhythm	5	5	4	6
Group D - 7 respondents				
	ELF		ENL	
	Helped	Hindered	Helped	Hindered
Speed	6	1	5	2
Word Choice	7	0	7	0
Sentence Structure	5	1	4	2
Pronunciation	1	5	6	0
Accent	3	3	6	0
Rhythm	5	2	1	6

Table 5. Respondent perception of factors that helped/hindered comprehension

These results seem to be respondent-specific, as often certain qualities have helped just as many respondents' comprehension as they have hindered. Of the responses regarding accent, Group B overwhelmingly found the ENL accent to aid understanding whereas responses regarding whether the ELF accent helped or hindered comprehension were split down the middle. Group C was split fairly evenly in having the accent help some and hinder others for both the ENL and ELF recordings and Group D found the ENL accent to help comprehension but was split evenly as far as the ELF accent helping/hindering comprehension. The ELF Groups B and C overwhelmingly found pronunciation to be helpful for understanding both recordings, but the native Group D found pronunciation to help comprehension of the ENL recording but rather to hinder comprehension in the ELF recording. Because the responses to this question were quite ambiguous, they will be compared to those of the rest of the qualitative questions in the subsequent analyses to see what trends emerge.

4.4.5 Question 6 - Perception of Native Accent

The last question on the survey asked respondents whether they thought the English accent of the interpreter was a native or non-native accent. The responses, as well as any preferences for one interpretation over another given, are shown in Table 6. Table 7 shows the respondents' perception of a native English accent as a percentage of the total number of respondents for each recording.

	ELF - Native Speaker of English?	ENL - Native Speaker of English?	Preference
Group A	5 no 1 unsure	2 yes 3 no 1 unsure	4 ELF
Group B	3 yes 27 no	6 yes 21 no 3 unsure	4 ENL 3 ELF
Group C	2 yes 7 no 6 unsure	2 yes 8 no 5 unsure	3 ELF
Group D	7 no	4 yes 1 no 2 unsure	4 ENL 3 ELF

Table 6. Respondent perception of native English accent and interpretation preference

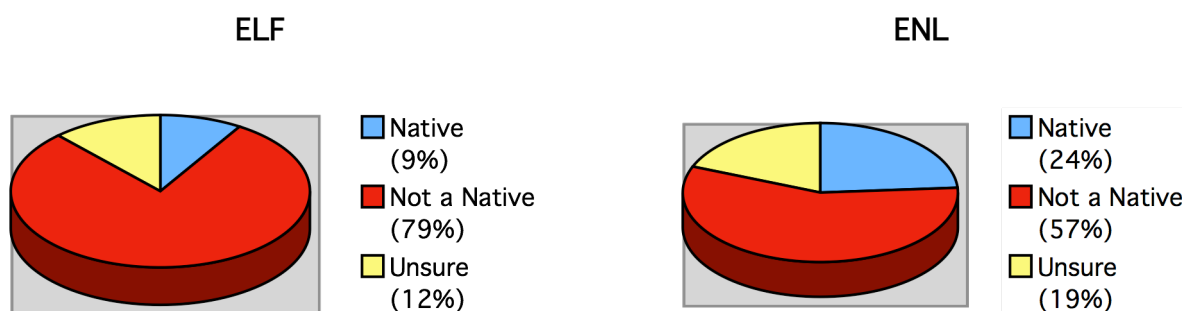


Table 7. Perception of native English accent as a percentage of total responses

This was perhaps the most surprising result of the survey. Out of the 58 respondents who answered this question, only 14 respondents (24%) thought the ENL accent was a native English accent. Five respondents (9%) even thought the ELF accent was a native English accent. Despite the small number of respondents who indicated their preference for ENL or ELF, Group A shows a trend in that the only respondents who indicated a preference did so in favor of the ELF interpretation. The remaining results aren't indicative of a preference of

one interpretation over another because of the small number of responses compared to the total number in the group or because the responses are split evenly, as for Group D.

4.4.6 General Comments: Group B - Estonians, Intermediate English Proficiency

Group B had no real comprehension difficulties with either the ENL or ELF recordings, which refutes the hypothesis. Their comprehension scores were quite high and, though some claimed difficulties with gleaning a meaning from the words, their responses indicate that, overall, the interpreting act was fairly successful for both recordings.

As far as the ENL recording, the respondents found pronunciation to be overwhelmingly helpful, word choice and accent to be helpful, but were split on whether rhythm helped or hindered their comprehension. However, if these numbers are compared to the comments made, two traits emerge. For one, it is unclear whether the respondents know exactly what they are responding to with the characteristic “rhythm”, as evidenced by the disparity between the quantitative and qualitative data. And secondly, that rhythm was actually the biggest factor hindering comprehension. There were a lot of negative comments made regarding long pauses, the speed of the text between the pauses, and the lack of fluency. There were also comments about long and complicated sentences, confusion with numbers, and too many corrections. These can all be seen as coded ways of saying that the rhythm was poor and inhibited understanding/following the text. This limitation is also brought out in comments saying that the content was boring and hard to remember. As far as delivery, respondents commented that the voice sounded tense, insecure, and monotonous.

As far as native accent, if the overwhelmingly negative response to the long pauses with text spoken too quickly in between them is coupled with comments about having to make a lot of effort and having to focus a lot, it seems that the respondents are responding to

something more than just a difficult or boring text. There is not enough evidence to prove that this is related to nativeness in the presentation, especially as most respondents didn't even perceive the accent to be native and some even suggested the interpreter was Estonian or, at least, Scandinavian, in origin. One aspect to be considered is the artificial situation in which the experiment took place. Despite efforts to make the recordings as true-to-life as possible, including not filtering out the background noise of the original speaker, the respondents were in an English classroom and aware of the fact that they were participating in a study. Nevertheless, perhaps the most telling comment made about the end-user's perception of a native accent was: "a native speaker would interpret more fluently." This expresses certain expectations of fluency that end-users have for interpreters working into their native languages, whether that be English or any other language. The responses were not all negative, however. Some respondents also found the presentation to be easy to understand and liked the neutral tone. Perhaps this is a reflection of the Estonian tendency to be more neutral and emotionless in self-expression than other social groups (cf. Estonians' self-perceptions as described in Kuslapuu's 2009 MA Thesis).

Regarding the ELF recording, the quantitative data shows that Group B found speed and rhythm inhibiting (though as we saw before, it is unclear if they know what "rhythm" means) and word choice and (once again) pronunciation to be helpful. There was overwhelming agreement in qualitative comments that this was an Estonian ELF accent, with one respondent commenting: "The accent was Estonian, so, for me, it wasn't hard [to understand], but, still, [it's] not the best thing to have." The respondents found this text to be "simpler", but also commented that this was due to word choice and sentence structure. Perhaps this is related to the fact that the interpreter was an ELF speaker and thus the

linguistic system used was more familiar. There was also a comment that “the pauses between the words helped me understand better”. This placement of pauses and the comment coincide with the idea that an ELF looks for meaning in words, and thus also produces meaning in word segments (instead of an ENL, who looks for meaning in familiar syllables and speaks in chunks of words with certain, stressed syllables indicating meaning).

A lot of positive comments were made, saying that the ELF interpretation was, indeed, easier to understand and the most negative comments were made about speed. Respondents were bothered that the interpreter alternated fast speech with pauses, though these comments were not directly connected to comments about comprehension, as they were in comments about the ENL recording. Overall, the majority found the ELF recording to be more pleasant to listen to.

Respondents commented on background noise for both recordings. Part of the reason for this was the sounds of the original speech heard in the recordings (which also made the situation more akin to a real interpreting situation). The most disturbing element brought out for both recordings was the unnatural presence of pauses, another factor that is often difficult to control in an interpreting act. Perhaps if the respondents had a visual, where they were able to distinguish pauses made by the speaker from those made only by the interpreter, they would have been less bothered by this element. Some commentators also acquiesced that these factors are inevitable for an interpreting situation. Question 5 asked if respondents were satisfied with the interpretation and the overwhelming response was positive. Respondents found the disturbing factors, like pauses and background noise, to be forgivable because “they weren’t the interpreter’s fault” and said that they would be satisfied with the interpretation because “they got the message”.

4.4.7 General Comments: Group C - Non-Estonians, Intermediate English Proficiency

The non-Estonian group made similar comments as Group B about both interpretations. They found the ENL to be more difficult and monotonous and had to make more of an effort to understand. The ELF interpretation was found to be more pleasant and to require less effort. Respondents also said that the content of the ELF text was simpler, despite containing some words that needed an extra effort to be understood. The quantitative data was fairly similar for both recordings and didn't give a very clear picture of which elements were most helpful or created the most problems. There also seemed to be some confusion from this group regarding the factors that they were evaluating. Their quantitative data shows that speed, word choice, and pronunciation were overwhelmingly found to help understanding for the ENL interpretation but in comments they said that some of the words were difficult to understand and that they had to make a lot of effort. The largest difficulties this group had seemed to be with understanding certain words or phrases, as brought out by Question 1 and some of the comments. Perhaps there could be an argument made for the vocabulary used in English to be country-specific despite the existence of a pan-European ELF language.

4.4.8 General Comments: Group A - Estonians, Pre-Intermediate English Proficiency

The comments by Groups B and C showed a slight preference for the ELF text. Nevertheless, the overall results were inconclusive and don't necessarily prove that the preference is related to the familiarity of the linguistic system. Group A had a shorter opinion survey to fill out but gave a more in-depth interview thanks to the small size of the group. The group made only negative comments about the ENL interpretation, saying that it was

difficult to understand, spoken too fast, the vocabulary and pronunciation were difficult and they didn't like the monotonous, hesitant voice. They found the topic of the ELF recording to be much more interesting, liked the speed and pronunciation, and said the interpreter had a nice voice and a good accent. Though the group was split on whether the ENL interpreter was a native speaker of English, when asked for their preference, all of the respondents said they preferred the ELF "because, well, she's Estonian!" Respondents also commented that their level of English was not up to par for the assignment but their preference for ELF was because her "pronunciation was easier for an Estonian to understand." There was one Russian speaker in this group who also found the ENL to have too many pauses and thought the sentences were too long and preferred the ELF because of "smoother" delivery and easier comprehension.

Even though the results from Groups B and C seemed inconclusive, the responses made by Group A place them in a new light. The hypothesis that ELF speakers understand an ELF interpretation better is confirmed by the group with pre-intermediate proficiency in English, with the clause that these results are dependent on the end-user's level of English proficiency. Their comments about the ELF interpretation having a better speed and a more interesting topic can be seen as coded ways of saying that the linguistic system was more familiar. Despite comments about the long pauses and monotonous tone of the ENL recording, Groups B and C overwhelmingly rated the ENL pronunciation to be helpful in comprehension. The responses regarding accent were less conclusive. The comments from the study indicated that respondents associate a native accent with a near-perfect performance. Since the ENL (student) interpretation was less than ideal for its long pauses and complicated sentence structure, respondents didn't consider it native and therefore there

was no noticeable trend in rating the accent highly despite the high marks given to the ENL pronunciation. Whereas this doesn't disprove the hypothesis that ELF would rate an ENL accent higher, it also doesn't prove it. What is clear is that there is a difference between "accent" and "pronunciation" for an ELF listener and a definite perceptual connection between native accent and quality of interpretation.

4.4.9 General Comments: Group D - Native Speakers

Perhaps the most surprising result in the study was that two native speakers also had doubts as to whether the ENL speaker was a native or not and one native speaker claimed that she was not. Nonetheless, these respondents rated the accent highly and commented that the reason for being unsure whether it was a native speaker was not the accent, but the speed of the speech. Another respondent blamed the unusual syntax. This confirms the previous findings that native accent is strictly tied to a quality interpretation in the mind of an end-user. The native speaker respondents also made comments about the rhythm of the ENL recording, but unlike Groups B and C, their comments reveal a clearer understanding of what "rhythm" means. Respondents commented having difficulty with "mid-sentence pauses", the sentence structure, and lack of fluidity. One respondent, who was unsure whether the speaker had a native accent or not, said that this was "not because of accent but because of speed". Another commentator said: "My only difficulty was the rhythm ... which, being somewhat different than what I'm familiar with, often distracted me in my listening and - in a very limited way - detracted from my overall comprehension." Nevertheless the same commentator appreciated the "nice accent and clear intonation".

As far as the ELF interpretation, there were a lot of comments regarding accent. One respondent found the accent to be very "casual and natural" but also commented

superfluously that she is a “fan of Northern-European accents”. Interestingly enough, the respondent who didn’t think the ENL accent was native assumed it to be a Danish accent and the ELF accent to be Estonian. This shows that the accent of the speaker became subconsciously connected to the topic of the text (Copenhagen and Estonia respectively). These two responses show that familiarity with an accent is key to comprehension and that perception of an accent can even be associative to meaning.

Familiarity also became an issue for the other responses to the ELF recording. Comments said that “the accent was thicker and the rhythm of speech more of an adjustment - but midway through the recording I was with her”, “initially, I had a little difficulty understanding because of the accent, but I was quickly able to adjust” and “this translator had a significant accent, but was still relatively easy to understand. I think being forced to pay closer attention to this speaker than I would to a native speaker made it overall easier to understand”. It is interesting that the respondent in this last comment found the additional effort made to understand the ELF accent to actually aid in comprehension because it increased the level of attention. As I’ve claimed earlier, Americans are unfamiliar with foreign accents and it takes them time to adjust. But these responses show that they were also accommodating and, once the adjustment was made, “the translation flowed very well and seemed natural”.

The ultimate question for the native listener seems to be the amount of effort that needs to be made to understand an interpretation. For the ENL, this was a problem because the often poorly placed and excessively long pauses made the message choppy and required more effort for the overall meaning to be communicated. In the case of the ELF recording, the effort was made in the first 10-15 seconds and related to understanding the foreign

accent, but once the adjustment was made, the interpretation was rated fairly highly. Because of problematic elements with both interpretations, the preferences expressed were split right down the middle between ENL and ELF. One telling comment sums up the opinions of the native speaker group quite well: “Ultimately, both [interpretations] were pleasant, and were I a delegate at some conference, I would’ve gotten most of the content from both speakers. Still, I guess I’ll say I prefer the [ENL], because it took me less time to process what was being said”. For native speakers, an ELF accent becomes more acceptable with increased exposure and familiarity with foreign accents. But if it becomes an element that increases processing time, it is seen as a negative factor on par with elements like poor rhythm, long pauses, etc.

4.5 Discussion

The results of the study were rather unexpected. The quantitative results alone don’t really indicate any definite trends; much less do they clearly prove the hypothesis. The first part of the hypothesis was that ELF end-users would rate the ENL recording higher, particularly for its native accent. The quantitative evidence shows no correlation between preference for a native or non-native accent and whether the respondent speaks ENL or ELF. The second half of the hypothesis was that ELF end-users would actually understand the ELF recording better than the ENL recording and that this would be evidenced by the results of the comprehension questions. In fact, all groups, including Group D’s native speakers, received slightly higher mean scores for the ELF questions than for the ENL questions (with Group A being an outlier). What’s more, the fact that most respondents didn’t even consider

the interpreter speaking in the ENL recording to be a native speaker, and that even some of the native speaker respondents had doubts, seemingly annuls the hypothesis altogether.

However, when the quantitative evidence is compared to the qualitative remarks made by respondents, some trends do start to take shape, showing that the hypothesis was perhaps misguided, though not altogether mistaken. The qualitative data shows a slight preference for ELF among the intermediate and native groups and a definite preference among the pre-intermediate group. Instead of giving conclusive information about native/non-native accent in relation to end-user comprehension, the qualitative comments give some insightful clues about how end-users perceive native accent and the expectations that are tied to native/non-native accents. In the following discussion, I will highlight these findings and draw some conclusions about the role of a native accent, among other delivery-related quality criteria, for the end-user in a conference interpretation setting.

As mentioned, it was surprising that only 24% of the respondents thought the ENL interpreter spoke in a native accent and 19% were unsure. There are several possible reasons for this. The key to my analysis lies in the comment made by a respondent in Group B: “A native speaker would interpret more fluently.” As far as the ELF recording, respondents were 79% sure that the interpreter was non-native. This recording also got higher quality marks. This suggests a correlation between level of expectations on the part of the listener and native accent. If we consider a native accent to be an ideal, it seems that respondents reacted to the unpleasantly long pauses and hesitations as indications of lower quality and thus didn’t grant the ENL interpretation the highest grade of “native”. It also shows that a native accent is one of many quality considerations, but certainly not necessary for an interpretation to be considered high quality. This leads to the conclusion that the end-user holds an interpreter

working into their native language to a higher standard than an interpreter with a clearly distinguishable accent.

On the other hand, confusion about whether the ENL was a native speaker of English confirms Bartłomiejczyk's (2006) finding that transfer and transcodage affect both interpreters working into their native language as well as those working into their non-native language. In addition to long pauses and hesitant speech, the novice ENL interpreter transferred words and syntax from the original, Estonian, linguistic system into her English interpretation. The use of such coping strategies no doubt decreases with experience, as does the tendency for word-for-word translations. The likelihood of a higher level of occurrences of transfer and transcodage is supported by the fact that, though the interpreter has spent the majority of her life living in an ENL context, her last three years were spent in the Estonian ELF context, and the effect of this time and of her interpreting studies taking place in Estonia surely has an effect on her product. Therefore it becomes difficult to talk of distinctly different discourse systems for the ENL and ELF interpreters used in this study. Linguistically, the ENL interpreter is no doubt a native speaker of English. As the act of interpretation puts strain on the speaker's linguistic output, various factors begin influencing this output. For an interpreter who has been bilingual all her life, it is inevitable that the influence of her second context, Estonia, is just as present as the influence of the first, the United States. But on the other hand, all interpreters who speak foreign languages inevitably have some contact with those cultures as well; therefore it would be impossible to have a "clean" test, in which the interpreter is void of all influence from the country of his/her non-native language.

It was evident from the ELF respondent groups that the commentators didn't always have a clear idea of the aspects of speech that they were commenting on. Nevertheless, their descriptions give some fairly interesting indications of the aspects that enhance or inhibit comprehension of a spoken utterance in English. One commentator in Group C said that the ELF "dialogue was more dynamic, the accent was less strong than the other dialogue, the rhythm was better". Perhaps having to communicate these opinions in their ELF language made it more difficult to be precise about what the respondents actually meant. This comment shows that "dynamism," "less strong accent" and "rhythm" are strongly associated with understanding. And yet, it remains unclear whether "less strong accent" really means "easier to understand accent", i.e. that the ELF accent was more accessible to this ELF user. Perhaps other comments, such as saying one recording had "smoother delivery" or "better rhythm" are also coded ways of saying "more accessible" or "easier to understand". If there was a higher level of clarity in such comments, more tangible parallels could be drawn between these factors and the interpretation's delivery-related features, such as native accent. In a future study it may be necessary to explain the meanings of each aspect of quality before end-users are asked to comment on them. Nevertheless, ENL respondents had no trouble distinguishing the different factors, so another approach may be to allow responses to be made in one's native language.

The results for Groups A and D show that the comprehension of a native accent is contingent on level of language proficiency. Group A made comments about understanding the ELF interpretation better because it was clear "she's Estonian" and the "pronunciation was easier for an Estonian to understand". The native speakers in Group D didn't find the ELF interpreter's accent to be an overall inhibitor to comprehension (after the adjustment

period) but still slightly preferred ENL over ELF. The majority of them thought that the ENL interpreter had a native accent. (One of the respondents who had doubts about the native accent stated the reason for it being “not accent but speed”, another blamed “syntax” and the third respondent associated the accents with the topics of the speeches and therefore thought the interpreter was Danish.) It is interesting to note that, though the intermediate level respondents in Groups B and C actually had quite a good level of English proficiency, this doesn’t also mean that they identify a native accent as well as a native speaker does. This indicates that there are aspects of native prosody that are familiar to the native speaker but that still lie beyond the reach of a learner at the intermediate level.

The ELF respondents in this study showed a slight preference for the ELF interpreter. Previous research (cf. Kalina 2005) also indicates that ELF listeners may prefer ELF interpretations because the linguistic system is more accessible to them and they have to make less effort to understand. The ENL respondents commented on the adjustment time needed for the ELF accent (generally about 10-15 seconds) but were otherwise not disturbed by the ELF linguistic system. However, if the accent had been too unfamiliar, or the effort needed to understand the ELF interpreter’s utterances had remained high throughout the speech, the ENL listener would probably have eventually become tired of having to focus harder to understand. This is also the case with unusual pronunciation of certain words or atypical syntax. For example, one respondent in Group D commented on repeated difficulties understanding the ELF interpreter’s pronunciation of the word “technology” and “technological”. In this study, the target text was only slightly more than six minutes long and technology was the main topic of the speech. In a daylong conference, it may become

quite tiresome for a listener to have to focus to understand a constant mispronunciation of the most used words.

With ENL comprehension of ELF utterances, the question of complete miscommunication is rarely the issue. Rather, the issue of cumulative ambiguity can become acute (Scollon & Scollon 2001). An end-user must trust an interpreter and have faith in the target text they hear. With each “mistake” or mispronunciation, the ambiguity of the message increases and, with it, doubt in the interpreter’s capabilities as well. Ambiguity can cause doubt in the interpreter’s product. And as the interpreter’s abilities come into question, trust in the interpreter decreases, and the quality of the ELF interpretation is jeopardized as far as the ENL listener is concerned. The nature of an interpretation interaction is similar to that of any discourse in that both demand a lot of recall and real-time processing on the part of both the speaker and the listener. And “inferences which are drawn in discourse are drawn as definite conclusions and they are drawn very quickly” (Scollon & Scollon 2001: 71). A listener, particularly one with a higher linguistic proficiency in a language than the interpreter, is concerned with understanding the message and probably won’t have the patience, nor the time, to consider what the interpreter could have meant in an ambiguous situation. This doesn’t mean that ELF interpreters should not work for an ENL audience, but rather that the ENL end-user, just like any end-user listening to their native language, is more demanding of an interpretation into English and more prone to mistakes and difficulties causing miscommunication.

As far as prosodic processing, it is also telling that most respondents made comments on the background noise. This was partly a response to the quality of the recording, but also to the fact that the original speaker’s voice was heard in the background of the recording.

These factors are characteristic of an interpretation situation and often uncontrollable. Nooteboom (1997: 672-673) explains that “the contributions of prosody to speech perception become more important when the segmental quality of speech or the listening conditions become less favorable”. As sound quality becomes worse, mental processing becomes higher and listening comprehension decreases. Based on level of English proficiency, it would be logical to assume that as listening conditions become worse, ELF listeners begin to have an increasingly more difficult time understanding (and that this difficulty would increase at an exponentially greater pace than for ENL listeners). It would be interesting to test this hypothesis in further studies in order to determine the degree to which sound quality affects the prosodic processing, and therefore comprehension, of ENL and ELF interpretations for ENL and ELF end-users.

On a positive note, the study shows that end-users of interpretation services are, above all, accommodating. Instead of worrying about the quality of an interpretation, end-users “want to understand the message and be able to act upon it, and would judge the quality of an interpretation by their success in this endeavor, no matter whether and to what extent it has contributed to that success” (Kalina 2005: 32). And the ideal situation is one in which the end-user is not aware that the information coming to them is being transmitted by an interpreter. This was confirmed by a respondent in Group B who said, “I would be pleased [with the interpretation] because the content was communicated.” It is clear that the end-user’s primary concern lies outside the realms of specific aspects of interpretation quality as such, and in the “functionability” of the message as a whole.

There were also several comments made about the topics of both speeches being too boring to be able to concentrate on the message. Kalina (2005: 29-30) purports that, in

addition to their socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds, the end-users' interest and motivation are key factors that determine the level of cognitive effort made to understand a presentation. The results of this study confirm her assertion. A respondent in Group B said: "I would be satisfied [with this interpretation] - if I was at a conference, I would be interested in the topic and I would get the interpretation that I need." Clearly, lack of interest and motivation inhibited comprehension because they inhibited the ability to concentrate on the message. Nevertheless, the respondents were willing to admit that their responses in this artificial situation were not indicative of how they would feel if they were actually at a conference where they would supposedly also have an interest in, and need for, the information presented. What's more, respondents acquiesced that several factors, such as long pauses and complicated sentence structure, were characteristic weaknesses of an interpreter under a large cognitive load and were willing to make allowances for the resulting imperfect output as a result.

In the background research, I argued that delivery-related factors of an interpretation, such as native accent, can be the making or braking of an interpretation (whereas slight cognitive mistakes are rarely as completely damaging to communication). I hypothesized that it is the prosodic aspects of an ENL accent that are the most difficult to follow for an ELF listener. But since the ELF prosodic system is more familiar, the ELF end-user will also find an ELF interpreter's presentation more accessible. Whereas this study didn't confirm that communication may actually break down as a result of a more difficult to follow accent, it did show that the success of an interpretation is dependent on processing time and the amount of effort needed to understand the delivery of the message. As effort increases, interest, motivation and comprehension decrease. Eefting claims that accent as a prosodic

element “cannot be tampered with without reducing the perceived acceptability of speech and speed of processing” (in Nooteboom 1997:662). Extended effort becomes tiresome and makes it difficult for a delegate to follow the proceedings at a conference. Thus, the findings of this study could be concluded in stating that the issue of a native or non-native accent is far superseded by the question of how much effort a listener must make to understand an interpretation, whether it is in an ELF or ENL accent. The study shows that ENL listeners have to make an initial effort to understand ELF accents, but that the problem is surmountable. ELF listeners seem to also need more effort to follow the ENL interpretation than the ELF one in this study, though it is unclear whether a perfectly rendered ENL interpretation would be easier to follow. Therefore, I propose that the consideration of processing time and amount of cognitive effort made by the end-user (vis-à-vis the interpreter’s delivery of the message) should be the basis for a new understanding of interpreting quality as it is related to the needs and satisfaction of the end-user.

4.6 Critique and Further Research

There are certain limitations to this study. For one, the interpreters were students and it is oft asserted that experiments using student interpreters don’t reflect the real world of professional interpreters. The recordings used in this study also show that the product of a student interpretation is far from as finely tuned as that of a professional and contains more mistakes, omissions, hesitations, etc. However, I would also argue that certain traits are amplified in a student interpretation, allowing for an easier comparative study. Language-specific traits such as accent, syntax and word choice are characteristics that can improve with experience. But no amount of experience will make an ELF interpreter into an ENL

speaker. Nevertheless, the results of this study, though very informative and interesting, show that it is even more difficult to isolate a specific aspect of delivery, such as native accent, if the surrounding interpretation is not polished.

There were also methodological weaknesses. Despite an effort to make the comprehension questions specific enough to test knowledge but also general enough that respondents would not have difficulty remembering the answers, many respondents found some questions to be confusing or to have more than one answer. On the other hand, results for the cognitive questions were so high, that it is clear that the questions were too simple and thus didn't give a very clear idea of actual comprehension. One way to avoid such a problem in future research would be to test the end-user's understanding of certain facts, such as numbers or proper names. This would give a clear idea of comprehension levels without having to draw up subjective questions. As far as the content of the interpretations, themselves, comments on being bored and unable to focus indicate that the study may give better results if the respondents had a vested interest in the topic, i.e. if it was related to their field of work or study.

This is a pilot study that maps out the situation of ENL and ELF interpreters in an ELF context. The value of the responses gleaned through this survey was in the spontaneous responses and interview process. Nevertheless, the conclusions I've made are conjectures based on a limited number of respondents. This study opens the way for supplemental empirical research that can isolate each factor and test it in a more controlled setting. Kalina (2005) outlines some fairly specific methods of testing aspects of interpretation quality and success when it comes to working into the retour and Cheung (2003) provides a good methodological example in which he is able to isolate accent and accent-related factors in

Cantonese and Mandarin and test their effect on the perceived performance quality and satisfaction of listeners. The aim of this study was to reproduce the multifaceted interpretation setting, keeping the subdued sounds of the original speech and using authentic interpretations. This introduced a lot of uncontrollable variables, making a single and irrefutable answer to the hypothesis impossible to draw. However, it also made it possible to elicit spontaneous information that would have been limited by a more strict methodology.

As far as I know, this is the first master's thesis study done at the University of Tartu that deals with the end-user. I encourage further research in this area. It would be particularly interesting to further this research by testing similar groups with interpretations done by professional interpreters. Another question that emerged is whether the end-user's perception of native accent is related to the confidence they have in the interpretation. For example, this study showed no particular connection between perceived quality and a native accent. But perhaps if the respondents were asked which interpretation they found to be more trustworthy - the ENL or the ELF - the results would be different. I would also be very interested to read a more controlled experiment comparing processing time for the end-user and the amount of effort made to understand an interpretation to find confirmation or refutation for my theory that they are interconnected. Within such research, there is also room to investigate processing time and its relation to native or non-native accent, which may give more definitive answers to the hypothesis that impelled this study.

And lastly, interpretation is a form of cultural, not just linguistic, transfer. One way that the *lingua franca* English context in Europe differs from other interpretation contexts is that Europe is composed of a lot of different cultures. We can perhaps argue for one, common, "European" culture. Pöchhacker (1995: 49) shows, however, that in interpreted,

international events, we can rather speak of an “expert culture” that “transcends national-societal borderlines.” Thanks to this unifying element, participants “have more “cultural” common ground (in terms of what they know and do, and how) than there are cultural barriers actually separating them by hampering communication”. It would be interesting to test this theory in the context of ELF listeners at international conferences. The present study doesn’t account for the cultural context of the interpreters or respondents. But certainly the context, cultural backgrounds of speaker and listeners, location of the event, and internationality of the event all affect comprehension and perception of interpretation quality.

There were also limitations to this research as far as accessibility of materials and my level of expertise. Very little literature on interpretation theory is available at the libraries in Estonia. Fortunately, a lot of material is available online and I had access to the library at the University of Georgetown in Washington, D.C. where interpretation is also taught. However, several of the works cited in this work remain secondary citations because of a lack of access to the original sources. My supervisor, Tiit Kuuskmäe, and I also spent a considerable amount of time working on a prosodic analysis of the ENL and ELF recordings. Unfortunately, we had to acquiesce that our knowledge of the phonological systems of English (what’s more, non-native English) is too limited to be able to do such an analysis justice. I was later able to consult English teacher Rebekah Armstrong, which led to a superficial, auditory analysis of the two recordings. Nonetheless, it would be interesting to continue work on determining the aspects of an Estonian ELF accent that differentiate it from native versions. Such research would not only be helpful to us, interpreters, but also to the English teaching profession.

5. CONCLUSION

As interpretation students, we spend two years working to hone our skills and learning how to provide the highest quality service possible. We spend a lot of time in the classroom doing practical exercises and training. In commencing this research project, my goal was to supplement the work done in the classroom. I wanted to explore an aspect of interpretation theory that is relevant, interesting and enlightening for me as a young professional. Therefore, I embarked upon a study that would show whether the instances of miscommunication that I have experienced as a native speaker of English in a society of non-native speakers would carry over into my work as an interpreter. The interpretation context in Europe has evolved with the spread of English as a *lingua franca* and the end-users of English interpretations are no longer only native speakers. However, the repercussions of an interpreter working into his/her native accent that emerged from the ensuing research are applicable not only to the ELF context in Europe, but also to all interpreters working into their native languages, as well as to those working retour into English.

The spread of the English language throughout the world has led to a nativization of the language into different *lingua franca* systems that differ from native originals. Each of these “new” languages has its own, unique discourse and linguistic systems. The European ELF system, however, has evolved in an area where all speakers have different mother tongues which has also created a unique in-group based on mutual accommodation. The adoption of an ELF language introduces situations of miscommunication when the system comes into contact with native versions of English. On the level of discourse systems, different levels of linguistic proficiency create a hierarchy between in-group and out-group members, which can lead to tensions. On the level of linguistic systems, tensions are caused

by limitations to the accessibility of another linguistic system. Prosodic features, such as stress patterns and reductions, can create difficulties of production and comprehension for a non-native speaker. The mutual accommodation that is characteristic of in-group communication for an ELF system falters and instances of inter-system miscommunication emerge.

Research on interpretation quality has focused on delivery-related features but the question of the interpreter's native accent has been shown to be considered unimportant. My experience would indicate that difficulties with comprehending a speaker's native accent could lead to communication breakdown. Thus, it is possible that the ELF end-user of an ENL interpreter may experience the same difficulties, indicating that a native accent may be more important to interpretation quality than it has been given credit for. The end-user of an interpretation act needs to understand the message and be able to act upon it. However, end-users are not good judges of their own level of comprehension as studies have shown them to rate the pleasant sound of interpretations above cognitive considerations. Thus, research on interpretation quality should account for the needs of the end-user, but also for the factors affecting their actual comprehension. The question of a native accent versus a non-native accent ultimately becomes one of familiarity. For the European interpreting context, where the end-user of an English interpretation is not necessarily a native speaker, it may not be ideal for the interpreter to be a native speaker either, as a non-native interpreter's discourse and linguistic systems may be more accessible to the listener.

The dichotomy created between in-group and out-group communication and the ensuing potential for miscommunication became the basis for the hypothesis for the empirical study. The hypothesis was that the difficulties of comprehension that a non-native

listener may have listening to a native interpretation might cause communication breakdown. The ELF listener may judge the ENL interpretation to be higher quality but will actually exhibit lower levels of comprehension than for an ELF interpretation.

The results of the empirical study show that perhaps the more acute question for a novice interpreter, such as myself, is the end-user's perception of a native accent. The study proved that comprehension of a native English accent is contingent on the language proficiency of the listener. But perception of the quality of an interpretation is dependent on native accent in that an end-user expects an interpretation done with a native accent to be ideal and holds it to a higher standard than a non-native interpretation. As an end-user's needs for the material presented at a conference are very practical, their effort to understand this information must be minimal. This is an issue that transcends the question of the interpreter's accent for the listener and that is relevant to all interpreters working into their native languages. Nevertheless, the interpreter must remain aware of the prosodic aspects of his/her interpretation and their affect on the cognitive load of the listener. An interpreter must adjust all facets of an interpretation to the end-user's needs in order to decrease the effort they need to make for comprehension. I propose that the consideration of processing time could be the basis for a new definition of interpretation quality.

From my perspective as a beginning interpreter, this research was invaluable as it places the two years' worth of work done in the classroom in a real setting. It is quite telling of the nature of the classroom context that the impetus for this study was a question of native or non-native accent. Working through the background research and the empirical study gave me a much wider understanding of the interpreting act, proving that this is a field in which there are no black and white issues and where a "yes" or "no" hypothesis may be too limited

in scope to give information about the larger picture. All aspects of what an interpreter does, how he/she produces the target text, and how the end-user perceives the interpreter's product are tightly interconnected. In the classroom, a lot of focus is spent on cognitive issues, but the delivery-related criteria seem all too often to be left on the back burner. As novice interpreters acquiring our university degrees, we are professional communicators who are often reminded to "interpret the meaning and not the words". But it wasn't until I had a chance to see the effect of my interpretations on a public that I began to understand what that exactly means. In the light of this research, I can still confidently state that accounting for delivery-related features is essential to ensuring that successful communication takes place during an interpretation. Therefore I would add to the above-mentioned adage, that an interpreter must "interpret the meaning, and not the words, in a manner that the effort made by the end-user to understand the meaning is minimal".

In conclusion, I would also like to thank the people who contributed to my research process: my supervisor, Tiit Kuuskmäe, for his unending support and enthusiasm, and for directing me on my first meanderings into the world of prosody; my second supervisor, Professor Krista Vogelberg, for her advice on the methodology and statistical analysis of the empirical study; Rebekah Armstrong, for sharing her English teaching expertise and her assistance in analyzing the recordings used in this study; Margus Puusepp for lending me indispensable research materials I would not have been able to find elsewhere; the library at the University of Georgetown in Washington, D.C. for their extensive collection of books on interpretation theory; and finally, the instructors at Tartu University's Interpretation Centre for the last two years of instruction and criticism that helped me hone my skills as a young, professional interpreter.

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APPENDIX A - Transcription of ENL Recording

Colleagues, Commission,

I'm sure you've all heard that the UN is having its climate conference in Copenhagen right now. Estonian media has covered this event as well and I'm sure you've all heard a lot about it. But at the same time, since I live in Copenhagen, I thought I would tell you a little about

5 how this climate conference is taking place and what the Danish media has been writing about it - about the practical sides and about what the Danish say about it amongst themselves. I have to begin by mentioning that the climate conference is very important for the Danish. All of the daily papers write about it constantly and the TV channels have live coverage. The idea that a so-to-say marginal, small country has over a hundred leaders gather

10 in it is not an everyday event and the Danish are taking it very seriously. The main rehearsal took place a little while ago. On the fifth of October, the Olympic Conference was held there, where it was decided that Rio de Janeiro will organize the next summer Olympic Games. Such people as Michelle Obama, her good friend Oprah, and Barack Obama visited the conference. He also took Michelle back to America afterwards in his own plane. The security

15 was very strict and since there was no problems, they found that Copenhagen was ready for the climate conference. More than a hundred and ten world leaders attended the climate conference and they all had their delegations attend with them. The delegations differ in size, of course. For example, the Brazilian delegation consists of around six hundred people. In addition to the delegations, over four thousand UN officials, two thousand five hundred

20 government representatives, and almost six thousand protesters - sixty thousand protesters, excuse me - attended the conference. This creates two questions for the city. First of all, how to keep order in the city, and second of all, where to house all of these people. The Danish

resolved the first question by bringing more than six thousand police forces and by enlargening their technological base. They brought police cars from Holland and other
25 neighboring countries, they have water cannons and other such things that they might need to calm the masses. In addition to such technologies they've also prepared new prisons for the potential protesters. The prisons are placed in the beer factory. Denmark has invested one point two million-billion crowns into the security for the event. In addition to police, about four thousand reserve forces have come to Copenhagen to help secure the event. And if the
30 temperature in Copenhagen is three to four degrees different from that in Estonia, it's clear that people can't sleep on the streets. All of the hotels have been sold out for a long time and even all of their extra beds have been put into use. Since the need for accommodation is still pretty big, the Copenhagen city government has taken three methods into use. They have rented three large cruise ships. The ships house police and security forces. The second thing
35 that the government has done is that the official delegation members who don't fit into hotels are housed in private homes. This is either by paying them or for free. There are surprisingly many people from Copenhagen who have decided to take up the option and have housed delegates in their homes. People have even taken vacation for a couple weeks to allow the maximum possible number of people to sleep in their homes. Protesters and NGO members
40 are able to sleep in school gyms, where they can sleep on the floor and use the showering facilities there. So it seems to me that as far as security and accommodation, all of the preparation in Copenhagen has been very good.

APPENDIX B - Transcription of ELF Recording

So as Malle and I found out yesterday, as we were explained, there are three things we can be certain about: taxes, death and technical problems. But it seems that these technical problems usually come from too-complicated technological solutions. So I'll tell you about small technological solutions that have solved big problems and very successfully. This is a speech

5 by Rain Rannu, who is from a company called mobi-dot-ee. He started to deal with mobile solutions in universities. At first, his company provided the service only to Estonia but now to the whole world. His company is active in twenty countries in Europe and Asia and his company is a good example of how a small thing can be very successful and have a very wide effect to the world. So the cost is small but the effect is very large. And these are

10 projects that have very simple technological solutions but very effective solutions. The first example is James Eberhardt in the United States. His company, or an NGO, is called the MG foundation. The goal of the company was to create a system of mobile donations. They created the system where sending text messages by mobile phones, they could donate to different organizations. Their greatest success was during the crisis in Haiti, where people

15 could donate ten dollars with one text message. The campaign lasted for seven days and during that time, twenty-five million people donated. This sum of money was twenty-five percent of all the donations to Haiti from the United States. Before that, people had to donate via checks or banking transfers, which is quite complicated and donations weren't that large. But now, during that seven days, James Eberhardt could really influence this aid to Haiti. At

20 the same time, this technological solution was very simple. Another example by Rannu is a software called Frontline SMS. That was developed by George Nesbit. George Nesbit is a student of Stanford University. He visited Africa and saw that the medical workers going to

the remote places in Africa, spending a lot of money going there, and then still finding that they have to get the information from the local people back to hospitals. So they had to travel
25 back and forth a lot, spending a lot of money and time for that. So Josh Nesbit thought out a system how these medical workers can send information to hospitals via text messages and hospitals can also send the medical records to the doctor via SMS. So the medical worker has to travel to this far-away place only once. The simplicity of this system is that Josh Nesbit didn't have to do anything else but to teach the doctors to send text messages. This system
30 works with very simple mobile phones so you don't need an iPhone or any complicated mobile phone. Nesbit also collected phones in the United States. For one iPhone he got a hundred very simple mobile phones, which he handed out in Africa, thus saving a lot of time, money and nerves and helping people a lot. There are very many of such projects. But as these solutions are so simple, then they are so simple and very effective, why aren't there
35 more of such projects? So Rannu gave several reasons. The first of these reasons was that people don't believe that they can do something very big with such simple means. People think that in order to do big things, big organizations are needed. The second problem is state-level problem. Organizations such as Enterprise Estonia or Estonian Development Fund are not used to supporting small initiatives. They are used to supporting large organizations
40 and projects. So their thinking should be influenced in a way that they would understand that a small project can achieve a lot. And the third reason why there are not so many simple projects is that people don't believe that something can be done. But the good news is that even if this work is hard, then not many special skills are needed. You just need the belief that something can be done and everyone who wants enough can do it. Thank you.

APPENDIX C - Survey

Statistical Information

Native Tongue:

Age:

Male or Female:

Area of study or profession:

Level of English:

Comprehension Questions: Copenhagen Climate Conference

1. How many heads of state participated in the conference?
 - a. over 50
 - b. over 100
 - c. over 150
 - d. over 200
2. What were the biggest difficulties in organizing the conference?
 - a. keeping order and flights for foreign guests
 - b. good media coverage
 - c. keeping order and housing people
 - d. where to hold protesters
3. Were all delegations participating the same size?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
4. Where did the police hold the protesters?
 - a. jail
 - b. other cities
 - c. cruise ships
 - d. beer factory
5. Where did people sleep?
 - a. cruise ships, hotels, and in schools
 - b. with friends
 - c. cruise ships, private homes, and schools
 - d. hotels, on the streets, and schools

Comprehension Questions: Small Technological Solutions

1. Does Rain Rannu's company work in Estonia or in other countries also?
 - a. Estonia
 - b. other countries too
2. According to Rannu, which are the best projects?
 - a. projects that are cheap but effective
 - b. projects with good technology
 - c. projects that receive a lot of donations
 - d. projects that get state support
3. What was the effect of the mobile phone project?
 - a. Americans went to Haiti to help
 - b. American doctors could help people in Haiti faster
 - c. Americans made donations to Haiti
 - d. Americans learned to send text messages
4. What was Josh Nesbit's solution?
 - a. exchanging iPhones for other phones
 - b. teaching doctors to send text messages
 - c. teaching doctors to use advanced phones (like iPhone)
 - d. Nesbit only had to travel to Africa once
5. Why don't people do small projects?
 - a. Small projects means little money
 - b. The government doesn't have money to support them
 - c. It's hard to see how effective they are
 - d. Small projects need special skills

Opinion Questions (the same questions were asked about both recordings)

1. How easy was it to understand the text? (please choose one)

- (a) I don't understand the words or the message
- (b) I understand the words, but not the message
- (c) I understand the message, but some of the words or phrases are confusing
- (d) I understand the words and the message

2.	What helped your understanding?	What made it difficult to understand?
Speed	.....	.....
Word Choice	.....	.....
Sentence Structure	.....	.....
Pronunciation	.....	.....
Accent	.....	.....
Rhythm	.....	.....

Comments:

3. Did you have to make an effort to understand at some point? When and why?

4. Was it difficult to answer the content questions? Why?

5. Was the interpreter pleasant to listen to? Would you be happy with this interpretation?

6. Do you think the speaker was a native speaker of English?

RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL

Filosoofiateaduskond - Germaani, romaani, ja slaavi filoloogia instituut
Tõlkekeskus

Lili Grabbi

Ingliskeelne pealkiri: **The Repercussions of Native and Non-native English Accents on Perceived Quality and Comprehension in Conference Interpreting**

Eestikeelne pealkiri: **Inglise ema- ja võõrkeelse aktsendi mõju konverentsitõlke kuulaja kvaliteeditajule ja arusaamisele**

Magistritöö
2010

Lehekülgede arv: 82 (koos lisadega)

Märksõnad: konverentsitõlge, tõlke kvaliteet, inglise keele kasutus Euroopas, inglise keele emakeele ja võõrkeele aktsendid, *lingua franca*.

Käesoleva tööga soovisin uurida üht suulise tõlke aspekti, mis mõjutab minu enda tõlkepraktikat. Uurisin kuidas inglise keelde tõlkiva tõlgi aktsent mõjutab kuulaja kvaliteeditaju ja arusaamist. Kuna räägin ise inglise keelt emakeelena, olen tihti kogunud olukorda, kus inglise keelt võõrkeelena kõnelevad isikud ei saa minu aktsendist aru sama hästi kui nad saavad aru teiste inglise keelt võõrkeelena kõnelejate aktsentidest. Uuringus soovisin tuvastada, kas selline arusaamise tõrge kandub ka minu tõlgete kuulajateni.

Inglise keele levik maailmas on tekitanud olukorra, kus sellest keelest on saanud *lingua franca*, ehk kommunikatsiooni võimaldav (abi)keel, mida enamik kõnelejaist ei räägi emakeelena. Inglise keele levik on kohaldunud kohaliku kasutusspetsiifika järgi ja mugandunud kasutajate vajaduste kohaselt. Ka Euroopas kasutatakse inglise keelt *lingua franca* keelena, kuid olukord on ainulaadne, sest kasutajad räägivad kõik erinevaid emakeeli.

Inglise keelt kasutatakse ka üleeuroopaliseks kommunikatsiooniks. Seega on tänapäeva Euroopa tõlkemaastikul inglise keelse suulise tõlke kuulaja tihti inglise keelt mitteemakeele kõneleja. Kuna tõlgi töö eesmärk on võimaldada kõne mõttest arusaamist, siis tõlgi jaoks on oluline kindlustada, et tema keelekasutus, sh aktsent, on kuulaja jaoks arusaadav.

Taustakirjanduse peatükis kirjeldan inglise keele levikut Euroopas ning neid keelelisi ja kultuurilisi aspekte, mis võivad takistada kommunikatsiooni inglise keelt emakeelena kõneleja ja võõrkeelena kõneleja vahel. Seejärel kaardistan aktsendiga seotud küsimusi tõlketeooria valdkonnas. Lõpuks viin läbi empiirilise uuringu, mida ajendab hüpotees, et inglise keelt võõrkeelena kõneleja küll hindab emakeelset aktsenti kõrgemalt kui mitteemakeelset aktsenti, aga saab tegelikult mitteemakeelse aktsendiga tõlkest paremini aru.

Uuringus on kasutatud kaht autentset tõlkelindistust, mida mängisin erinevatele kuulajagruppidele. Esimene grupp kuulajaid oskasid inglise keelt eelkesktasemel, teises grupis oli eestlased, kes oskasid inglise keelt kesktasemel, kolmas grupp olid mitteestlased, kes rääkisid inglise keelt kesktasemel, ja viimaks oli valimis grupp inglise keelt emakeelena kõnelevaid informante. Pärast lindistuste kuulamist vastasid informandid sisu- ja arvamusküsimustele. Võimaluse korral järgnes lühike intervjuu, kus küsisin informantidelt lisaküsimusi nende arvamuse ja tõlkeelistuste kohta.

Uuringu tulemused olid küllaltki üllatavad. Kvantitatiivne analüüs näitas, et kõik kuulajate grupid (välja arvatud inglise keelt eelkesktasemel oskajad, kes ei jõudnud kõikidele sisuküsimustele vastata) said keskmiselt natukene paremini mitteemakeelt kõneleja tõlkest aru, kuigi statistiliselt ei olnud arusaamise vahe aktsepteeritavate standardite põhiselt oluline. Kvalitatiivse analüüsi kõige üllatavam tulemus oli see, et 57% kuulajatest, sh mõned inglise keelt emakeelena kõnelejad, ei arvanud, et emakeelne tõlge oli tõepoolest emakeelse

kõneleja tehtud. Kuulajate kommentaaridest oli selge, et probleemiks ei olnud tõlgi aktsent, vaid muud esitlusega seotud aspektid, nagu pauside pikkus ja jutu sujuvus mis tulenesid sellest, et tõlgid olid tudengid ja nende tõlked ei olnud veel ideaalsed. Kuna kuulajad ei pidanud emakeelse tõlgi aktsenti emakeelseks, võib järeldada, et kuulaja on emakeelse tõlke puhul nõudlikum kui mitteemakeelse tõlke puhul.

Samas tõestas inglise keele eelkesktaseme grupi mitteemakeelse tõlgi eelistus püstitatud hüpoteesi selle klausliga, et arusaamine ja kvaliteeditaju sõltuvad ka võõrkeeleskuse tasemest. Inglise keele emakeelsete kuulajate grupi arvamused näitasid, et kuulaja jaoks on oluline ka see, kui palju ta peab pingutama, et tõlgist aru saada. Mida suurem ja järjepidevam on kuulaja jõupingutus, eriti pika konverentsi jooksul, seda vähem on ta võimeline tõlkesisu talletama. Kuulaja ülim nõue on saada tõlgitud kõne sisust aru viisil, mil ta on võimeline seda informatsiooni oma vajaduste kohaselt kasutama. Kokkuvõtteks ei sõltu suulise tõlke kuulaja kvaliteeditaju ja arusaamine niivõrd tõlgi aktsendist, kui arusaamiseks vajaminevast pingutusest ning parim tõlge on selline, mille puhul see pingutus on minimaalne.