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What is English?

Abstract

This article considers the developing status of English in Norway, both as a language and as a school subject, making predictions about which ontological and epistemological perspectives will influence English language teaching (ELT) in Norway towards 2030. Status quo and predictions for English in Norway are approached from two angles; the development of presiding beliefs about language in linguistic science and in ELT practices from the 19th century to the present, and the development of English as the foremost global language of communication. The article shows how English language beliefs and the status of English are made visible in the national subject curriculum and in the English language practices among Norwegian adolescent learners. The discussion suggests that English is increasingly characterised by those who use it as a second or later language, including Norwegians who negotiate the meanings of English in the ELT classroom. The article predicts that a logical development for Norwegian ELT is increased influence from social constructionist perspectives, in combination with the existing focus on communicative competence. The article shows that global circumstances related to the status of English are reciprocally related to local beliefs about language among educational authorities, teachers and students, and that these have major implications for English as a discipline in lower and higher education.

Introduction

The concept *English* represents various dimensions: for instance, English is the name of a European people, and it is also the language as spoken by people in that country (as well as in several other countries, depending on the definition of other concepts such as *speaker* and *language*). English is also, for instance, the codification of a language in dictionaries and grammars, and in many contexts (particularly related to education) it also refers to literature written in English. What English *is* depends on the context in which the reference is used. And what English *is* in a particular context will affect how matters of English and the people who concern themselves with it are treated in this context and related contexts.

Knowledge about language beliefs – what language *is* in various contexts – is particularly important to stakeholders in language education, because beliefs about language determine both the object of research and the object to teach and learn. Since people with conflicting beliefs about language will often have conflicting opinions about which aspects of language are important to teach and learn, awareness about the impact of language beliefs is particularly important to those who design curricula, and to those who interpret them. In this article, beliefs about English will be discussed related to the context of English language teaching (ELT) in Norway. The Norwegian ELT context will be accessed through the national English subject curriculum (KD, 2006, 2013), as well as through results from a study into the English language practices among Norwegian learners of English (Rindal, 2010, 2013, 2014; Rindal & Piercy, 2013). However, in order to discuss current beliefs about language, these must be presented against a wider backdrop of perspectives related to language in general and specifically to English. The article therefore presents the historical development of views of language and language learning since the 19th century in linguistic science as well as in English language teaching practices in Norway. Furthermore, it reviews previous categorisations of speakers of English across the globe and attempts to place Norway in this categorisation. Based on the previous and current status of English in the world and in Norway, predictions will be made about which ontological and epistemological perspectives will influence Norwegian ELT in the decades to come. This article structure may seem like an unlikely composition of content and purpose. However, predicting the future when it comes to languages is an unconventional practice for scholars, and this mandate has elicited a somewhat unconventional article genre.

Beliefs about language

The national English subject curriculum for lower and upper secondary school focuses on all the dimensions of English mentioned above; the language, the history and culture of English-speaking countries including the development of English into an international language, and literature and other cultural expressions created by people in English-speaking countries (KD, 2006, 2013). Out of all these dimensions, the four main subject areas of the curriculum *Language learning*, *Oral communication*, *Written communication* and *Culture, society and literature* suggest that the English *language* seems to be the most essential dimension of English in the Norwegian ELT context, that students learn to communicate in English, that they learn to *use* the language. However, what it means to learn to use a language depends on the ontological and epistemological views among those involved in the language teaching and learning activities. What it means to learn to use English does not only depend

on beliefs about English, but also on beliefs about language in general. The representation of the concept *language* is, like *English*, also contextually dependent; it depends on whom you ask, and also when you ask them. Consequently, in order to discuss what English is, we must also discuss what language is.

Language beliefs within the *applied linguistics* field are often motivated by language beliefs within general *linguistic science*. While linguistic science concerns itself with the study of languages, applied linguistics often informs language teaching practices, and since applied linguistics is often motivated by linguistic science, the priorities and interests of language teaching are often related to the priorities and interests of theoretical language research. However, there is often some delay in the transition of language beliefs from general linguistic science to, first, applied linguistic science, and then to actual language teaching practices. This delay probably arises because the perspectives have to be “translated” into another context; theoretical linguistics has to be applied in the context of education. By reviewing the developments of language beliefs in linguistic science paralleled with language and language learning beliefs in education, we can identify which priorities and interests are prevalent in present-day ELT practices in Norway, as well as make predictions about what to expect in the decades to come.

An ideal linguistic system

When modern languages such as English, German and French were introduced as school subjects at the turn of the 19th century, the purpose and method for teaching them were transferred from the tradition of teaching Latin; analysing classical pieces and investigating the grammar and rhetoric of these. The method was called the grammar translation method, and according to its principles, language learning was concerned with learning abstract grammar rules and vocabulary and translating to and from the target language (Simensen, 2007). The sentences that were translated were written to describe linguistic forms, not to learn language in context, and so they were often unconnected and could seem quite absurd. The grammar translation method reflected the interests in language research in the 19th century; linguists were mostly concerned with the documentation of languages, mostly looking back at older versions of national languages, providing “objective” descriptions of them. These documentations were important to the development of national identity, a central undertaking for Romanticism (Bucholtz, 2003).

However, by the turn of the century, linguists became more concerned with contemporary language use. The Reform movement was a reaction in the applied linguistics field to the principles of grammar translation, shifting the priority from reading and writing to listening and speaking (Simensen, 2007; 2011). The movement introduced the science of phonetics and the founding of the International Phonetics Association (IPA), which developed an international

phonetic script that could be used to describe any language. The students were to read coherent texts and "discover" grammatical rules, as well as read and write phonetic transcription. The main goal of this *direct method* was to develop competence in listening and speaking with "good" pronunciation. The first half of the 20th century also saw the emergence and prevalence of structural linguistics, which was also, like the Reform movement, concerned with contemporary language use, but which made a distinction between language use and a deeper, stable structure that kept everything in place (cf. notions of *parole* and *langue* by de Saussure, 1972). It was this deeper structure that was the object of study for linguists, and therefore contemporary language use had to be taken out of its context and studied in isolation, without all the disturbances of "real-life" contexts. The structuralists acknowledged the heterogeneity among speakers, but language variation was irrelevant – and even limiting – to the descriptions and explanations of the linguistic system.

In Norway, English became a school subject towards the end of the 19th century, and grammar translation was the dominant L2 teaching method in the first half of the 20th century, although elements from the direct method were introduced from the 1920s and 1930s (Simensen, 2007, 2011). The implementation of phonetic practice and access to "authentic" language in Norwegian ELT was delayed due to limitations in teacher numbers and language competence, but was helped along by the British Council, who established themselves in Norway with their own representative from 1946 (Gudem, 1989). The Council assisted Norwegian ELT with consulting and teacher training until around 1960, consequently influencing teaching practices, language policy, curriculum material and exams, particularly related to pronunciation and intonation. Around the time English became a mandatory subject in Norway in 1969, British influence was replaced by that of American structuralism with the introduction of the audiolingual method, several decades after the emergence of structuralism in general linguistic science. Structural linguistics brought to language teaching an emphasis on scientific representations, describing languages accurately the way they were used by native speakers. There was a greater emphasis on the quantitative aspect in L2 learning, repeating again and again so as to automatise language.

At this point, in both linguistic and educational science, beliefs about language had focused on sentence level grammar – the object of study and the object to learn started with the capital letter and ended at the period. There had been very little focus on the linguistic or social context where the sentences were placed.

It's all about context

In the 1960s and 1970s, sociolinguists presented novel theories and new empirical evidence that challenged the structuralist view of language as homogenous and variation as irrelevant. Sociolinguist William Labov conducted

research that showed that people's linguistic behaviour correlated with their backgrounds, beliefs and speaking situations, and that speakers were aware of these differences. He showed that language variability is structured, not random, and that this structured variability was evidence of linguistic change in progress (Labov, 1966). Alongside the emergence of Labov's variationist sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropologist Dell Hymes argued that all language use is infused with its sociocultural context, and so in order to communicate, speakers not only need linguistic competence but also sociolinguistic competence (Hymes, 1972). English language teaching in Norway was eventually greatly inspired by the thinking initiated by Hymes, and still is; Hymes is very well-cited in teacher education, in particular his claim regarding the competence necessary to communicate in a language, that you need to know not only grammar and vocabulary, but also "when to speak, when not, as to what to talk about with whom, when, and in what manner" (Hymes, 1972: 277). The focus in second language acquisition research shifted from a cognitive perspective with a focus on the individual's age and aptitude, to contextual – cultural, situational, pragmatic – use of language with a focus on communication. Communicative competence, a term coined by Hymes, included *language knowledge* as well as *ability for use*, unlike the concept of language competence professed by structural linguistics. Communicative competence is probably the concept that has influenced the two most recent curricula in Norway the most, with their principal goal of teaching students to *communicate* in English (KD, 2006, 2013; KUF, 1996).

Towards the end of the 20th century, new perspectives emerged due to reactions against variationist sociolinguistics. The homogeneity of language which the structuralists professed and which was the subject of criticism by variationist sociolinguists such as Labov, was in a way reintroduced by themselves (Jaspers, 2010). Although variationist sociolinguists regard speech communities as heterogeneous, this heterogeneity is systematic; there is an underlying assumption in this perspective that speech communities contain speakers who are alike, making community and the individual speaker almost the same thing. A solution to this could be found in social constructionist theory (e.g., Giddens, 1984), according to which language is used to construct identities – people do not merely reflect pre-existing social structures with language, but use language resources to construct and reconstruct their social surroundings, although constrained by those same social surroundings. Whereas variationist sociolinguistics says that how you speak depends on who you are, social constructionism says that who you are depends on how you speak; people construct their selves and demonstrate these selves to their surroundings by their linguistic (and other) choices.

Social constructionist perspectives influenced sociolinguists to focus on language practices against a wider system of social meaning, where the goal is to describe what kind of meanings linguistic features can have, and how they

can be used as a resource for self-positioning in a community of speakers. The linguists who engage in this *stylistic practice* approach (e.g., Eckert, 2004, 2012) argue that linguistic forms can *index* – they can *mean* different things, and speakers can assemble and reassemble these language forms to negotiate meaning. The meaning of a linguistic feature varies across contexts (depending on who utters it where, when and to whom), but the various meanings are recognisable to other speakers in the same community of speakers (i.e., speakers of the same language, dialect or sociolect). Moreover, speakers' deliberate use of linguistic forms contributes to the negotiation and maintenance of their meanings.

Social constructionism has also influenced scholars in the applied linguistics field, including teacher educators (although perhaps not yet as forcefully as in sociolinguistics). For instance, in *The social turn in second language acquisition*, David Block (2003) argues that applied linguists should concern themselves with language as a sociohistorically situated phenomenon rather than an individual and cognitive process. Bonnie Norton (e.g., Norton & Toohey, 2011; Norton Pierce, 1995) has for the past two decades written about social identity and language learners, arguing that the practices of the classroom where language learning is situated are crucial for the learner's commitment and desire to learn a language: how a learner imagines who he or she can be and which communities they can be part of in the future, be it local, national or transnational communities, has an impact on his or her investment in learning the language. Claire Kramsch (2009) focuses on learners' experiences with learning a new language, arguing that language instruction should be approached from a view of language learning not as an instrumental activity for getting things done, but as a subjective experience and struggles for power and culture. She suggests that language teachers and learners should observe and evaluate their own language practices and beliefs.

These quite recent social constructionist perspectives in applied linguistic science entail some sort of claim to a second or later language, and an encouragement to grant learners some sort of speaker agency not unlike that in the stylistic practice approach. However, this idea of ownership or agency is not immediately compatible with a learner context, where notions of "correct" often prevail and where the learner is, by definition, not an expert. It could be argued, however, that these ideas of learner context are challenged when it comes to English, a language which is increasingly *international*. The presentation of historical developments above shows that even long before social constructionist theory emerged, both theoretical linguists and applied linguists have focused on language *use*, and for the past decades language as object for study and language as taught in school has meant language as used by people. The question is who qualify as *users* of a language?

The speaker of English

Fuzzy edges

Several attempts have been made to categorise the speakers of English in the world, the most famous perhaps being the concentric circles first introduced by Kachru (1985).

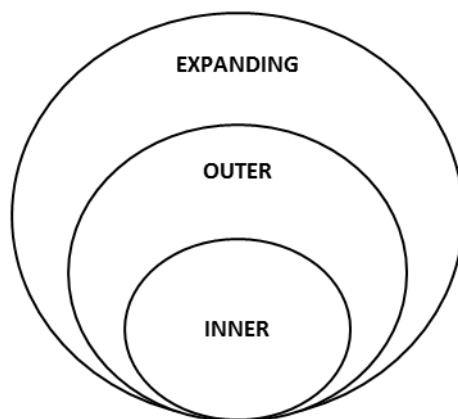


Figure 1: The concentric circles of English

In this model, the inner circle represents the speakers who have English as their first language – native speakers of English, who through history spread the language, more often than not through colonialism, to countries that have been placed in the outer circle. In these outer-circle countries, English is an official second language, and it often dominates in certain domains such as education, government and among higher social classes. And then, in the expanding circle, we find all those countries where English is taught as a foreign language in school, and where English is acknowledged as important to, for instance, tourism, business, and international communication. Countries in the outer circle have developed their own models of pronunciation due to a long history of intra-national English language use. In these countries English has been influenced by one or more local languages, and historical traces of these local languages can be found in the English spoken there, so that for instance Indian English and Nigerian English have become recognisable concepts. Countries in the expanding circle, however, have traditionally looked to the inner circle – the native speakers – for models; imitating a native speaker as carefully as possible has often had successful outcomes for learners in the expanding circle.

There are quite a few problems with this model, which most applied linguists will agree, including Kachru himself (Graddol, 2006). The categories native users, second-language users and foreign-language users are not self-evident 30 years after their introduction. Today, some native varieties are valued more than others, many speakers in the outer circle grow up with English as their first language and are actually native speakers, many second-language users are more proficient in English than natives, and many foreign-language users know more

about the language and use it better and more appropriately than both native and second-language users. The edges of this model are increasingly *fuzzy*, because English has developed over these past decades. When the model is nonetheless included here, it is because it aptly illustrates a *nation view* of language – where speakers are categorised into groups based solely on geographical borders, and where speakers in certain countries are more valid users of English than others – which is still a very prevalent view in ELT documents and practices.

The status of English today

Norway is no exception to the exceptions of the concentric-circle categories. Norway is traditionally an expanding-circle country with foreign-language status for English; taught at scheduled hours in the classroom, and acknowledged for its significance to education, business and mobility, but not an official second language. However, Norway has seen an increase in English language access and domain use. In large companies English is often used as lingua franca (Hellekjær, 2007), and in higher education a considerable amount of written material and lectures are given in English (Ljosland, 2008). English is a mandatory school subject for 11 years, and we can assume that all now living Norwegians have had some form of English language teaching (Graedler, 2002). The past couple of decades young Norwegians have experienced massive exposure to English through audio and audiovisual media, and many travel frequently and use English as a lingua franca with both native and non-native speakers (Graedler, 2002; Rindal, 2010). English has developed into a familiar language for Norwegians (Graedler, 2002; Rindal, 2013; Simensen, 2011).

This familiarity is not specifically a Norwegian or European phenomenon. In the concentric-circles model, native speakers are located in the *core*, which makes them more important in a way. However, today the majority of English interactions involve only non-native speakers of English, and so the status of English in the world is increasingly characterised by those who use it as a second or later language, rather than by its native speakers (Graddol, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2010). English increasingly belongs to the world as it is used and shaped by different communities and for different purposes. English is *the* global language of communication; between two people with different first languages, English is very likely the lingua franca they use to communicate. *English as a lingua franca* (ELF) scholars argue that non-native speakers of English form new Englishes which express their sociocultural identities (Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011), and their research is concerned with the fluidity and hybridity of language. (Although there are some ELF studies on written language, research into the hybridity and fluidity of English focuses mostly on oral communication, as spoken language is constantly subject to linguistic change and allows for variation to a much greater degree than written language.)

Language education authorities in Norway have been very attentive to the development of English as a global language. In the national curriculum, all subject curricula are introduced with a Purpose of the subject, reflecting the objectives of educational authorities in Norway, and the Purpose of the English subject begins as follows:

English is a universal language. When we meet people from other countries, at home or abroad, we need English for communication. [...] When we want information on something of private or professional interest, we often search for it in English. In addition, English is increasingly used in education and as a working language in many companies. To succeed in a world where English is used for international communication, it is necessary to be able to use the English language and to have knowledge of how it is used in different contexts. (KD, 2006, 2013: 2)

In these first lines of the curriculum, English is presented as a necessary skill in the Norwegian society: Norwegians need English both to work and live in Norway, to communicate with native and non-native speakers around the world, and to participate in higher education. There is also a paragraph on the role of English as something more than a necessary skill:

English as a school subject is both a tool and a way of gaining knowledge and personal insight. [...] Development of communicative language skills and cultural insight can promote greater interaction, understanding and respect between persons with different cultural backgrounds. Thus, language and cultural competence promote the general education perspective and strengthen democratic involvement and co-citizenship. (KD, 2006, 2013: 2)

These sentences stress the importance of English for the development of the individual's personal insight and community citizenship (Norw. "dannelse" – a term used in the original, or Germ. "Bildung"). The curriculum thus communicates social constructionist perspectives of language as a social endeavour, allowing for a view of English as a resource in the individual's construction of identity. However, this is presented as little more than an opportunity; it does not directly encourage individual agency or negotiation of available English resources. Preceding the paragraph on "personal insight", it also says that "the subject of English shall contribute to providing insight into the way people live and different cultures where English is the primary or the official language" (KD, 2006, 2013, p.2). This is an indirect reference to Kachru's inner and outer circle, reflecting a nation view of speakers of English. In the competence aims which constitute the main part of the curriculum, there are sporadic references to "Great Britain and the USA", albeit the most common reference is to the undefined concept of "English-speaking countries". Furthermore, competence aims ask of students to "evaluate and use suitable listening and speaking strategies adapted for the purpose and the situation" and to "listen to and understand social and geographic variations of English from

authentic situations” (KD, 2006, 2013, p.10), but they do not ask them to choose English forms which are compatible with their style or which might demonstrate who they are to the surroundings, or to discuss what meanings these English forms might have in communities of speakers within and outside the classroom. It does not say anything about individuals developing their *selves* in another language.

Status quo

By presenting communication and English as a tool as the major goals of instruction and by emphasising the development of English as a global language, the national curriculum acknowledges the status of English in the world and in Norway. There is a delay, however, in the application of social constructionist perspectives in the English subject. Although social constructionist perspectives have influenced applied linguistic *science*, they have most likely not yet influenced ELT *practices* to the same degree. In the subject curriculum, linguistic forms seem to be attached to geographical areas or communicative purposes, and these attachments seem to be non-negotiable. Social constructionist perspectives are present but not applied, and they conflict with more instrumental perspectives on second language competence. Herein lies the status quo of beliefs about language in general and English specifically, and their accompanying ELT practices in Norwegian school: While there seems to be no doubt about the globalness of English and the relevance this status has to language learning, educators seem at the same time to have difficulties ridding themselves of the idea of English as nationally defined. The idea of English as a language spoken by the monolingual majority in a handful of countries seems to exist alongside the inevitable comprehension of English as an international language and of learners needing English for more than syntactically analysing random sentences or reciting Shakespeare or writing letters to the editor of *The New York Times*.

One reason why there is little doubt about the international status of English among teachers and language education authorities in Norway is that these people, too, use English for various purposes. Norwegians, too, are *users* of English. Because there is general agreement about the global status of English as a language of communication, Norwegian ELT will most likely continue to apply international perspectives of English through the curriculum, textbooks and teacher education. However, less certainty is related to how the *implications* of this developing status of English will be handled in Norwegian ELT; how educators will deal with the consequences of English being a language of communication for Norwegians, of English being, to a considerable extent, *their* language. The national curriculum acknowledges the development of English as a global lingua franca, but it does not pay attention to Norwegians’ reactions to this development; how they interpret and respond to not only the development of

the global status of English, but also the local status of English. No attention is paid to Norwegians as speakers of English.

Such attention is paid below, as results are presented from an investigation into the English language practices among Norwegian learners. The study attempts to access how Norwegian learners interpret and respond to the development of the global and local status of English, and what they are doing linguistically with English given the conditions of the Norwegian ELT context presented above. The study takes as point of departure the social meaning of language forms, as in studies of language variation using a stylistic practice approach, and is thus largely influenced by social constructionist perspectives. As in most investigations into the hybridity of language, the focus in this study is on spoken language.

Meaning in English

The study referred to here is the author's research into the attitudes, choices and pronunciation of English among 97 Norwegian 17-year-olds (Rindal, 2010, 2013, 2014; Rindal & Piercy, 2013). The participants were in their second year of upper secondary school (Vg2), and were students in four different classes at four different schools in Oslo. Attitudes towards native English accents were elicited indirectly with a speaker evaluation experiment (Garrett, 2010) and more directly through a questionnaire and group interviews. In the questionnaire, the participants were asked which accent they aimed towards when they spoke English, and reasons for this chosen accent aim. Students from each school participated in group interviews (total N=12), where L2 attitudes and choices were explored further.

The attitude research (Rindal, 2014) showed that standard southern British English (SSBE), also known as Received Pronunciation (RP) or more colloquially "Oxford English" or "Queens English", was regarded as the most prestigious accent, associated with education and formality. This accent was regarded by many of the participants as a "correct" school standard; some of the interviewees reported that they believed their teacher would prefer that they used this accent when speaking English. The following selection of quotes¹ illustrates some of the associations to SSBE:

I think that British English sounds a lot nicer than American, and much more civilized.

I simply think that British English sounds prettier and more intelligent.

British is more classy

British seems more refined "nicer". American to me is not intended for business/work.

British is more appropriate for work.

If you're going to sit in class and impress the teacher a little then you should maybe try more towards the English- the British

In comparison, American English was considered more informal and less academic, for better or for worse, as illustrated with these participant quotes:

I personally like American English better because I think British English sounds more shallow.

[American] is less formal

I prefer the more relaxed, plainer American

American English sounds poor and not well educated [...] I don't want to speak like a slob

I think British English is too old-fashioned and arrogant in a bad way.

To a certain extent, these associations, these meanings attached to linguistic forms, informed the participants' L2 choices – if they wanted to imitate an American or a British English accent. For instance, the idea that British English was associated with formality and education was a reason to attempt to use this accent when speaking English, while a wish to sound informal was a reason to aim towards American English. However, although the attitudes that emerged in the speaker evaluation experiment showed an almost unanimous endorsement of standard southern British English (as compared to American English, Scottish English or Leeds English), British English was not the most popular pronunciation target. Approximately one third of the participants reported British English as their desired L2 accent, while approximately 40 percent aimed towards an American English pronunciation (Rindal, 2014). Although speakers of SSBE are judged positively by Norwegian learners, this does not necessarily mean that the Norwegian learners wish to behave like speakers of SSBE. Participant comments in the questionnaire and interviews suggest that SSBE was somehow considered too *marked* as an L2 accent, so that using it would draw unwanted attention in the classroom:

if you don't quite get [British English] right, you would just sound stupid, and people would think you are trying hard to be something you are not

Talking with a British English accent sounds fake, and the words when speaking English sounds more appropriate in American English

People who speak British seem like overachievers because then you get the impression that they either lived abroad in a British-speaking place or they've just tried insanely hard in school

To a certain degree, the markedness attached to British English would extend to any native accent of English. Approximately 15 percent reported that they avoided native varieties as target accents altogether, because these are associated with qualities learners did not wish to project. They did not want to sound like an American or a Brit, because they were not American or British, and putting on an accent meant putting on an identity. When the majority of participants did in fact report a native accent as their desired L2 pronunciation, this might be due to an idea of English as nationally defined, or perhaps due to an understanding of the values attached to native-sounding L2 accents. As an alternative, though, some of the participants reported a desire to use a culturally and politically neutral accent of English, which would reflect their English proficiency without any cultural baggage, arguing that they could have and show language proficiency without imitating a native speaker:

I speak in a way what I've learnt and what I've picked up a little here and a little there

If I suddenly should have started speaking British then that would just be weird because I don't live in Great Britain I'm not a Brit and I'm not influenced by British culture at all, so that would change parts of the identity

I think many of us want to be neutral because I want to be thought of as someone who actually knows the language [...] I don't want to be thought of as an American or a Brit

This desire to use a geographically and culturally neutral English pronunciation reflects the status of English as an international language. If the majority of conversations in English in the world include only non-native speakers, and English first and foremost is a global lingua franca, it makes sense to not try to sound like (one of the comparatively few) native speakers. The question is how does one produce a neutral English accent? An auditory analysis of seven phonological variables produced by the participants in this study showed that their English pronunciation was characterised by hybridity and variability; most of them used more than one phonological variant per variable (Rindal & Piercy, 2013). This intra-speaker variation might be due to limited competence, for instance limited meta-linguistic knowledge of English pronunciation and/or limited opportunities to rehearse an accent. Conversely, the intra-speaker variation in L2 production could be due to a deliberate blend of accents, mixing American English and British English so as not to imitate any native accent completely. The participants' pronunciation was vastly dominated by American English forms, though, which cannot be accounted for by a deliberate blend of linguistic variants. American English pronunciation was even dominant for participants who had reported a British accent aim and participants who reported to avoid native accents. However, the American English variants were fewer for participants with a British English aim than for participants with an American English aim, suggesting that learners did in fact, at least to a certain extent,

pronounce words the way they wanted to pronounce them (Rindal, 2010; Rindal & Piercy, 2013). Limited competence is therefore not a sufficient explanation for the participants' hybrid pronunciation; there seems to be at least some speaker agency involved. Furthermore, it is not possible to avoid ascribing the American English pronunciation dominance at least in part to English language media, with its abundance of American English resources. The participants seem to have "picked up" (cf. participant quote above) English language forms from exposure in their surroundings, somewhat similarly to the processes of first language acquisition. It does not seem unreasonable to predict that imported media will continue to affect the L2 among Norwegian adolescents in the decades to come.

The results from this study, illustrated with the comments above suggest that native accents of English, and perhaps especially SSBE, carry with them social meanings which are transferred to their speakers, and in the case of L2 speakers, perhaps even strengthened: the formality assigned to SSBE is attributed to its speakers, and in the case of the L2 speakers, this function is related to school and ELT and might signal a student who is *trying too hard*. The meanings attached to native-English-speaker forms are negotiated in the Norwegian classroom, reshaped to suit this particular context, where English is neither a foreign language nor a lingua franca. Although Norwegian adolescents use English as a language of communication with people from other countries, they do not use it as a lingua franca amongst themselves – in most cases members of a classroom community in Norway will be more proficient in Norwegian than in any other language, including English. At the same time, English is the designated language of the ELT context, and so English becomes both the aim of the learning activities, the topic of the activities, and the medium of these activities. In addition, Norwegian adolescents meet and interact with English in various other contexts for various purposes outside of school. It is inevitable that there are feelings attached to this language, that English language use is in some ways *personal*. Oneself-identity is intimately connected to one's language, because it is through communication with others that the self is constructed; it is inevitable that development of second language proficiency entails some kind of development of identity. Even though Norwegian adolescents in the ELT context do not need English to communicate amongst themselves, English still has communicative functions; L2 practices can communicate who you are and what you want, much like how social constructionists talk about language. As argued by supporters of a stylistic practice approach, language forms are part of a linguistic repertoire, from which resources can be exploited to negotiate meaning.

Predictions towards 2030: Stylistic practice and communicative competence

It is valuable knowledge for a language user to be aware that values are attributed to language forms and to understand that these values are not constant but vary across linguistic markets (cf. Bourdieu, 1991). Such awareness constitutes part of a speaker's communicative competence, influencing the language choices being made when interacting with other speakers. Language variation can therefore be a sign of linguistic proficiency among proficient L2 learners. The participants in the study did not seem to consider English as a language detached from its users or the context in which it is used. Some of the participants were even evidently pragmatic about their choice of accent, communicating an instrumental use of English pronunciation according to purpose and opportunity:

We are so surrounded by both American and English that it is good to have well understanding for both.

It can be useful to learn both.

It depends on the situation.

I would use American with adolescents and British with grown-ups. [...] When we hang out with friends [...] we don't want to use the British English we try to learn at school, we would rather do what we think is cool.

Such pragmatism and instrumentality is in line with the Norwegian educational authorities' main aims of developing students' communicative competence and treating English as a tool to function in society. If communicative competence is the goal, and Norwegians need to communicate in English with both native and non-native speakers for various purposes, they will need to learn to use English as an international language. Unlike the outlook of a nation-view of language, English as an international language is not *one* English variety, but a perspective, a purpose of language, which determines which skills are important. When the goal of instruction is communication, and English is an international language, then English instruction must encompass both linguistic skills and sociolinguistic ones. The ability to vary language according to purpose and other participants in a linguistic interaction is an example of a sociolinguistic skill.

There seems to be a development towards acceptance of variation both in the curriculum and among the students' L2 practices. It is therefore not unreasonable to predict for the near future of ELT that L2 pronunciation characterised by hybridity and variability could be interpreted more frequently as communicative competence than as limited L2 proficiency. One could also imagine that learners will be allowed increased personal idiosyncrasy in their L2

pronunciation, that some hybridity and variability will be accepted as an element of second language identity.

The historical developments of language views and research interests presented above show that trends in applied linguistics are significantly influenced by trends in general linguistic science, and that ELT in Norway generally follows global trends of language teaching practices. It is therefore this author's prediction that English in Norwegian lower and higher education will "catch up" with the latest trends in general linguistic science. Catching up with linguistic science entails that the acknowledgment of language variation as structured and meaningful will reach the English subject discipline in higher education, where "objective" descriptions of (ideal) language have traditionally held their ground. At the very least, the number of courses that are thematically related to the current status of English as a global language is likely to increase in English language and teacher education departments. Catching up with linguistic science also involves perspectives of social constructionism increasingly influencing English language teaching in Norway towards 2030, if not dominantly, then at least in part (new perspectives rarely replace old ones entirely, but new knowledge adds to established practices). Social constructionist beliefs seem to go remarkably well with communicative competence perspectives, and a combination of the two seems to be an appropriate framework for how English will be treated in Norwegian classrooms. Social constructionist influence entails that educators will increasingly acknowledge language as a social endeavour, exploiting the opportunities presented in the curriculum related to the role of English for the individual's development of personal insight and identity. It entails that educators will increasingly acknowledge that learners of English in Norway do not just respond to existing meanings attributed to English forms, but that they participate in the negotiation of these meanings as English continues to develop as an international language. More specifically, this would mean that presumptions about values attributed to L2 forms are developed into knowledge about such values, and that this knowledge is taught to learners to improve their communicative competence. The learners themselves would naturally be part of this knowledge development, as they know best the existing meanings of L2 forms in their own ELT classroom. In 2030, English will still be a personal language to Norwegians, but it will also be acknowledged as such.

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Notes

¹ Most of the quotes in this text are copied from the questionnaire (which was responded to in English) with minor typographical editing. Interview quotes which were originally in Norwegian have been translated by the author (see Rindal, 2013; 2014 for quotes in the original).