

“Fake it till you make it” - Attitudes towards L2 accents among  
prospective English teachers in Norway

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## Abstract

This study investigates L2 accent attitudes among prospective English teachers in Norway. Greatly inspired by Jennifer Jenkins' (2009a) predictions of a shift in non-native English language teaching "[...] away from its almost exclusive focus on native varieties of English" (10), the thesis focuses on the ambivalent relationship between the native speaker-ideal for pronunciation and the growing acceptance of international varieties of English. Based on results both from a questionnaire and in-depth interviews, the study explores prospective teachers' attitudes towards their own English accent, attitudes towards accents used by teachers and learners in the classroom, and attitudes towards international varieties of English, emphasising Norwegian-influenced English.

The results demonstrate both ambivalent and contradicting attitudes among prospective teachers. At the heart of this ambivalence lies the tension between understanding and communication on the one hand, and the desire to sound native and hide the traces of the L1 on the other. The informants emphasise that L2 speakers do not need a perfect accent to communicate, but simultaneously express a strong preference for the British and American accents; not only for themselves, but also among teachers and learners in Norwegian classrooms. However, the participants express greater acceptance of Norwegian-influenced English among learners of English than among teachers, pointing towards Norwegian-influenced English as an *imperfect* accent, associated with learners at a lower level of proficiency.

The notion of native speaker ownership clearly persists in attitudes of prospective English teachers in Norway, dismissing claims of ELF that predicts a shift among expanding circle speakers towards viewing English language as rightfully their own. In contrast, results from this study indicate a view on English as the language of others; the English language belongs to the idealised native speaker. However, results demonstrate a careful shift in attitudes as teachers of tomorrow seem to express a desire to *think* differently about accents and uses of English but *do* the same – that is, emphasise understanding and communication in the classroom while encouraging a standard accent.

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## **List of abbreviations**

ELT – English Language Teaching

EFL – English as a Foreign Language

ESL – English as a Second Language

ELF – English as a Lingua Franca

EIL – English as an International Language

NNS – Non-Native Speaker

NS – Native Speaker

L1 – First Language

L2 – Second Language

ELT – English Language Teaching

TESL – Teaching English as a Second Language

TEFL – Teaching English as a Foreign Language

BrE – British English

AmE – American English

# 1. Introduction

Everyone has opinions about how languages should or should not be spoken. Language is an important part of our identity; the way we speak reveals something about who we are or how we want to be perceived, and language shapes the way we perceive others. In Norway, language attitudes comes to the surface every year as the Chairman of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee, Thorbjørn Jagland, announces the Peace Prize Winner with a heavily Norwegian-influenced English. The annual debate that follows in newspapers, on the street and in social media illustrates that Norwegians clearly have conscious opinions regarding how English should be spoken by Norwegians, and may suggest that many view Norwegian-influenced English as rather embarrassing<sup>1</sup>. The negative evaluations of Thorbjørn Jagland's Norwegian-influenced English become evident through unflattering remarks in the media, demonstrated by numerous comments published on Twitter, such as "Jagland can't and shouldn't speak English. It's so bad that it hurts listening to it" or "Oh my God. Jagland is going to speak English to the world again. I can feel myself getting embarrassed in advance" (*author's translations*).<sup>2</sup> Perhaps Thorbjørn Jagland's English would have been subject to less critique if he had succeeded in sounding more like a native speaker of English.

The tendency to favour native-like accents of English<sup>3</sup> has historically been an influential notion in English language learning classrooms around the world, using standard accents as the model for language learning and teaching. In his discussion of the native ideal among non-native speakers of English, Andreasson (1994) claims that it would be interpreted as rude to point out the traces of foreignness in non-native speakers' accent. Even though Andreasson's made his claims more than twenty years ago, it appears to be applicable to the negative evaluations of Jagland's Norwegian-influenced English:

In the Expanding Circle [...] the ideal goal is to imitate the native speaker of the standard language as closely as possible. Speaking English is simply not related to cultural identity. It is rather an exponent of one's academic and language-learning abilities. It would, therefore, be far from a compliment to tell a Spanish person that his or her variety is Spanish English. It would imply that his or her acquisition of the language left something to be desired.

(Andreasson 1994: 402)

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<sup>1</sup> The embarrassing use of Norwegian-influenced English is emphasised with publications like Stewart Clark's *Don't Smell the Balloons* (2006) and *Something Muffins* (2005). Here, the author presents examples of utterances where features of Norwegian and English are mixed with humorous outcomes.

<sup>2</sup> From "Jagland hetset og språkmobbes" [Jagland is being mocked and bullied for his language] (Larsen 2012).

<sup>3</sup> The native speaker ideal refers to the tradition of viewing American English (AmE) or British English (BrE) as the ideal model for English language learning (e.g. Cook 2002; Dalton-Puffer et.al 1997). Other native varieties could also be included, i.e. Australian English.



As is the case for most countries in the expanding circle<sup>4</sup>, English does not have an official status in Norway. However, the English language is very much present in Norwegian society; it is the language of films, TV-series and music and for some, English is the language used for business, trade or academia. To many speakers in countries such as Norway, the English language is an essential part of everyday life, and is mostly applied as a tool of communication between non-native speakers. The use of English as a tool for cross-cultural communication reflects a global use of English that has made several researchers criticise the common tendency in many English language classrooms to view native-like accents as the ideal for English pronunciation.

In recent years, several researchers have turned their gaze towards non-native learners and teachers of English to investigate whether increased globalisation is reflected in English learning classrooms around the world through an increased focus on variation and global use (e.g. Cook 2002; Nero 2005, Gagliardi & Maley 2010). Non-native teachers of English are in a unique position; on the one hand, they are expected to be highly proficient speakers of their second language and role models for their pupils. On the other hand, they are language learners themselves, and are commonly viewed as somewhat inadequate on the international ESL job market, where there is a clear preference for native English teachers.<sup>5</sup> Non-native teachers are important in the field of Global English, as they can greatly influence current learners of English and their attitudes towards the English language, accent choice and language use. In her studies on the non-native teacher, Jennifer Jenkins (e.g. 2007; 2009a) predicted that accent attitudes among non-native teachers would indicate a shift away from the focus on native accents as the ideal, and a move towards greater acceptance and encouragement of international varieties of English in the classroom: “[I]t would make sense for English language teaching to move away from its almost exclusive focus on native varieties of English” (Jenkins 2009a: 10). As this thesis has been greatly inspired by Jenkins’ prediction of a shift in accent attitudes, the ambivalent relationship between the native speaker ideal on the one hand, and the acceptance of international varieties on the other, will be a common thread throughout the paper.

## **1.2 Aims and research questions**

Written as a contribution to the growing field of research on teaching and learning English in the global classroom, this thesis investigates accent attitudes among prospective English teachers in Norway by combining topics of both sociolinguistics and teaching. Rather than focusing on the non-native teacher of today, the research is concerned with those who will teach English in the future, as they are in a distinct grey area between learners and teachers of English. Furthermore,

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<sup>4</sup> “The expanding circle” was initially established as a term by Kachru (1992).

<sup>5</sup> For instance, ESL jobs in Asia often list *native speaker* as the only required qualification for their applicants (i.e. [www.teachaway.com](http://www.teachaway.com))

language attitudes among prospective teachers can be interesting indicators of how English will be spoken by Norwegians in the years to come. As such, by investigating future teachers' thoughts on how English should be spoken by themselves and their future pupils, this study offers a snapshot of attitudes among prospective non-native teachers and an insight into perceptions of English by speakers in the expanding circle.

Greatly inspired by Jennifer Jenkins' (2009a) aforementioned predictions of a shift in accent attitudes among non-native teachers, the thesis aims at investigating attitudes towards English among prospective teachers in Norway by focusing on the ambivalent relationship between the native speaker ideal for pronunciation and the growing acceptance of international varieties of English. Clearly, the title *'Fake it till you make it': Attitudes towards L2 accents among prospective teachers in Norway* opens up for an extensive discussion of language attitudes that cannot be treated in all its complexity within the page limitations of this thesis. Therefore, the thesis will more specifically aim at answering the following research questions:

- a) What attitudes do prospective English teachers have towards their own English accent<sup>6</sup>?
- b) What are their attitudes towards accents used by teachers and learners of English in Norwegian classrooms?
- c) What are their attitudes towards international varieties of English, including Norwegian-influenced English<sup>7</sup>?

Based on results from both a questionnaire and in-depth interviews, the study will discuss whether these attitudes imply that prospective English teachers in Norway desire to aim at near-nativeness, or express a wish to move away from the native norm and point towards a general acceptance of Norwegian-influenced English and other international varieties of English. As the participants in this study are enrolled at teaching programs at university level, the thesis will also consider to what extent prospective teachers have been made aware of the increased focus on global use of English and English variations through their education.

This thesis explores language attitudes, a concept that has gained increased attention within the literature on international English. However, insight into L2 attitudes in Norway are rather limited, as the existing research on attitudes towards English in Europe tend to exclude countries outside the European Union, or simply mention Norway as part of Scandinavia together with

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<sup>6</sup> For further reference, this thesis focuses on *accent*, emphasising pronunciation. The term *dialect* is not applied, as this term includes other features of language, such as syntax and grammar.

<sup>7</sup> *Variety* is used to refer to language features more generally, not merely pointing towards pronunciation. *Norwegian-influenced English* refers to English spoken with traces of Norwegian language features, such as intonation and sentence structure.

Denmark and Sweden. The very foundation of this thesis is made up of the notion that attitudes play a significant role in language learning and use, including that of L2 learning and use. This thesis is concerned with the attitudes teacher-training students communicate towards English accents, and does not consider the conformity between expressed attitudes and actual linguistic behaviour. The thesis is founded on the assumption that L2 speakers can evaluate different varieties of English, and make more or less conscious accent choices in favour of one variety or the other. This notion is supported by Clark (2013), claiming that English teachers across the world must decide what variety of English they will promote in their classroom by making “a conscious decision in favour of one or the other” (15).

### **1.3 Outline of the thesis**

The thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapters 2 and 3 form the theoretical background for the thesis, with an initial introduction of English as a global language. With a short presentation of Kachru’s Circles of English (1992) and the associated critique and modification of this model, chapter 2 forms the necessary context to further elaborate on English in the expanding circle. Chapter 2 presents some of the numerous labels and acronyms used to refer to international use of English, emphasising the labels of ELF and EIL. Chapter 3 is dedicated to English language teaching in the global classroom, presenting previous research on the non-native teacher and learner. The theoretical presentation is rounded up by a brief discussion of the concept of attitudes as conceived of the sociolinguistic field. Chapter 4 presents methods used in this study, and includes a short discussion on the ethical concerns involved in conducting a peer study.

Results from the questionnaire and the in-depth interviews are presented in chapter 5. Here, results from the questionnaire are presented first in order to make up a foundation for the more extensive results from in-depth interviews with five prospective teachers. In chapter 6, the results are discussed in light of relevant theory. Chapter 7 ends the thesis with conclusions.

## **2. English as a global language**

### **2.1 The Circles of English**

English has developed from being the language of a small group of mother-tongue speakers, to become a global language spoken by people all over the world. Today, English is used to bridge the gap between people and cultures, applied as a tool for communication when people with different languages meet. Historically, the English language originates from the British Isles and was initially spread to the New World with settlers to America, New Zealand and Australia (Crystal 2003).

Through trade and colonisation, the language was later brought to countries in Africa and Asia, and during the twentieth century, English was established as the common language used for international trade, communication, entertainment and education. Crystal points at two factors to explain the global spread of English: “The present-day status of English is preliminary a result of two factors: the expansion of British colonial power, which peaked towards the end of the nineteenth century, and the emergence of the United States as the leading economic power in the twentieth century” (59).

Researchers have suggested several models to represent the global position of English. Of these, the most influential model has been the three circles suggested by Kachru (1992). In this model, the inner circle includes Britain, the US and other countries where English is the primary language. Kachru refers to the native speakers of the inner circle as the “traditional cultural and linguistic bases of English” (356). The outer circle consists of countries where English has gained some sort of official status and is formally defined as the second language, including several former colonies such as India and Kenya. Here, English is formally taught as a second language (ESL). By contrast, the expanding circle consists of nations “which recognise the importance of English as an international language, though they do not have a history of colonization by the inner circle, nor have they given English any special administrative status” (Crystal 2003:60). Speakers in the expanding circle, such as Norwegians, are formally defined as learners of English as a foreign language (EFL).

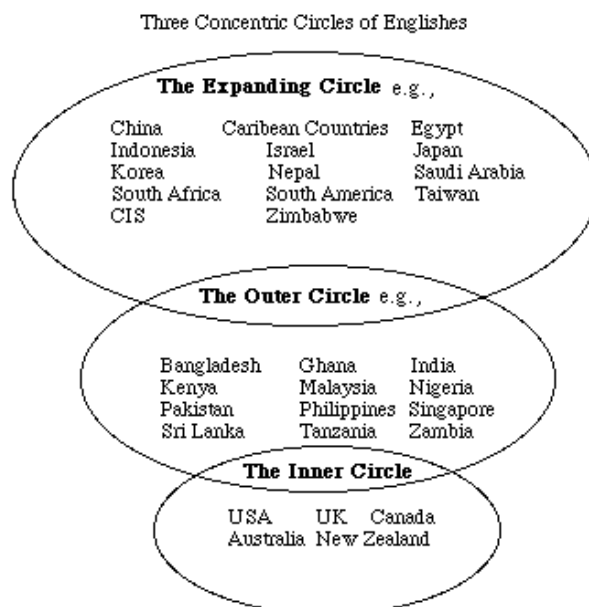


Figure 1: The Circles of English (adapted from Kachru 1992:356).

Kachru’s model has been debated and several modifications and new models have later been

suggested. The circles have particularly been criticised for drawing a somewhat simplistic picture of the global position of English, as the model emphasises historical context and makes a clear distinction between the norm-developing speakers in the inner circle and the norm-dependent speakers in the other circles, ignoring the grey areas between these speakers and their language use. Bruthiaux (2003) points to the difficulties of separating users of English in his critique of Kachru's circle and suggests a model based on sociolinguistic descriptions:

Better, I suggest, to base a model of English worldwide on a sociolinguistic description of contexts for the language than to see it primarily as promotion for selected varieties – less liberation and more linguistics, as it were. Secondly, persisting with the Three Circles model makes it less likely that all manifestations of English wherever they occur will eventually be seen as qualitatively comparable and equally valid. Potentially, any variety of English is capable of extending its functional range to the point where it becomes at first tolerated, then accepted, and finally recognized as a prestige variety, in its local domain and internationally.

(Bruthiaux 2003: 175)

Bruthiaux suggests a focus on the use and function of English that can better encourage a view on different English varieties as equally valid. Similarly, Graddol (2006) suggests a modification of Kachru's circles based on proficiency rather than historical expansion, where functional nativeness is used to characterise speakers of the inner circle. This model allows a more flexible distinction between second and foreign language users, as the division is purely based on level of proficiency.

Berns (1995) also questions the distinction between the outer and expanding circle in Kachru's model, and offers a new representation of countries that can be placed in a grey area between these circles with the Dual Circle. The Dual Circle combines countries where English is becoming a second language in terms of proficiency and use, including several European countries, with countries where English has an official status as a second language. Crystal (2003) emphasises the complexity involved in the process of distinguishing second language users in the outer circle from the foreign language users of English in the expanding circle:

The distinction between “second language” (L2) and “foreign language” use has less contemporary relevance than it formerly had. There is much more use of English nowadays in some countries of the expanding circle, where it is “only” a foreign language (as in Scandinavia and the Netherlands), than in some of the outer circle where it has traditionally held a special place.

(Crystal 2003:67)

In many European countries of the expanding circle, including Norway, English is used daily in different contexts and at various levels of proficiency. Seidelhofer elegantly describes the distinct presence of English in many European countries in her discussion on English as a lingua franca: “Having English’ in Europe has thus become a bit like having a driving licence; nothing special,

something that most people have, and without it you won't get very far" (2010:359).

## 2.2 Characterising speakers and uses of global English

The globalisation of English has become a field of growing interest for language researchers over the last decades, illustrated by the increased number of publications like *English as a Lingua Franca: Attitude and Identity* (Jenkins 2007), *English as a Global Language* (Crystal 2003) and *World Englishes* (Melchers and Shaw 2003). The vast literature emphasises various aspects of the international use of English, and applies a wide range of labels when referring to uses and speakers of English. In the following, the labels of English and English language users that are most central to this thesis will be presented, starting with the fundamental distinction between native and non-native speakers.

The most basic distinction between native and non-native users of English is often made on the basis of the different contexts of language learning. Gnutzamn and Intermann (2008) define native speakers as those acquiring their L1 language(s) in a natural setting, while non-native users learn their L2 in classrooms or other institutions. This distinction becomes more complicated as L2 users are divided into users of English as second language (ESL) and English as foreign Language (EFL). The boundaries between these groups are quite blurry, but originate in the assumption that ESL-speakers learn English in a country where English has an official status, whereas English does not have an official status in EFL countries.

Of the numerous acronyms and labels used to refer to the global use of English language, EIL and ELF are the most known. In recent literature, it has become increasingly common to use the term English as an International Language (EIL) or English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) when referring to the international use of English, including communication between both native and non-native speakers (e.g. Jenkins 2007, Seidellhofer 2010). Today, non-native speakers (NNS) greatly outnumber native speakers (NS) of English on a global scale and to emphasise this development, many scholars apply the labels EIL or EFL when referring to international use of English (e.g. Jenkins 2007, Seidellhofer 2010). Both EIL and EFL emphasise the status of speakers not only as learners, but also as *users*. According to Jenkins (2007), EIL and EFL usually refer to the same phenomena of English used in an international context. However, Jenkins promotes the ELF-label as it "reflects the growing trend for English users from, for example, Europe, China and Brazil, to use English more frequently as a contact language among themselves rather than with native speakers" (Jenkins 2009a:4).

The political agenda involved in applying the ELF label is emphasised by Jenkins' comments on the label as pointing towards community rather than differences between speakers of

English, and the rejection of native speaker ownership (e.g. 2000, 2007). ELF researchers point out that non-native speakers communicate successfully with varieties of English that are influenced by foreign phonology and grammar; these “non-core features” are according to Jenkins (2007) indications of new varieties being born and becoming “English in its own right” (2):

[I]t suggests the idea of community rather than alienness; it emphasizes that people have something in common rather than their differences; it implies that 'mixing' languages is acceptable [...] and thus that there is nothing inherently wrong in retaining certain characteristics of the L1, such as accent'; finally, the Latin name symbolically removes the ownership of English from the Anglos both to no one and, in effect, to everyone.

(Jenkins 2000:11).

As speakers all around the globe have adapted English to their domains and uses, new varieties of English have developed. In countries of the outer circle where English has become nativised and widely accepted as a local norm, researchers have applied the term New Englishes to describe these varieties. However, local variation may also develop in countries of the expanding circle as the speakers' L1 influences the use of English through features such as grammar or pronunciation. These varieties are not viewed as stable variations of English and are usually referred to as varieties of Global English, EIL or ELF. Seidelhofer (2010) use the term ELF-varieties when discussing the increased use of English in Europe and the possible shift in perceptions of ownership as L2 speakers adapt the language to their purpose:

One important implication that ELF researchers and (some other) applied linguists recognize is that the lingua franca – especially if it is used on a daily basis as is now the case for increasing numbers of Europeans – ceases to be perceived as the property of the ancestral speakers in whose territories it originated. Instead, ELF gets appropriated by its non-native users, who – like hitherto just like native speakers of a language – become acknowledged as agents in the process that determine how the language spreads, develops, varies and changes.

(Seidelhofer 2010: 362)

The use of the ELF label can be rather problematic as the term may be associated with less positive connotations than ELF researchers have tried to promote with the label, as demonstrated by Görlach's (2002) reference to ELF-varieties as “broken, deficit forms of English” (12-13). Furthermore, several researchers dismiss the claims of ELF, arguing that the term originally refers strictly to NNS-NNS communication, even though the term is widely used to include NS-NNS interaction (e.g. Maley 2010). Maley refers to Jenkins' and Seidellhofer's use of the EFL labels as “strong”, in contrast with the more “weak” use of the label applied by many researchers, where ELF is merely used to emphasise the diversity and complexity of uses of English (2010: 26). Furthermore, Maley (ibid) dismisses the strong use of the ELF label, claiming that research clearly

indicates that ELF-speakers mainly aim at imitating standard varieties of English; a trend that makes the swift establishment of new varieties in the expanding circle highly unlikely. In his critique of the use of the ELF label, Maley (ibid) conclude that the label is flawed in a number of ways:

It is theoretically untenable. A comprehensive model of Global English would have to be inclusive, dealing with the whole gamut of interaction types: NNS-NS, NS-Nativized variety, NNS-Nativized variety NNS-NS, NNS-NNS [...] It is practically unworkable. The attitudes and vested interests of sponsors, the views of learners and teachers, and the practical difficulties of classroom implantation all render the ELF project inoperable in practice.

(Maley 2010:42)

Maley's critique of the claims of ELF illustrates the political and cultural aspects that are involved in characterising speakers and uses of English in a global context, and points to the opposing views on how to include and recognise international uses of English. To avoid the controversy associated with applying the ELF label, this thesis refers to *international uses of English* and points to non-native varieties of English as *international varieties*. Furthermore, English spoken by Norwegians is regularly referred to as *Norwegian-influenced English* or *Norwegian English*; these labels are not, however, used as bold attempts to recognise Norwegian English as a variety of English in its own right, but is conveniently applied to refer to English spoken with traces of Norwegian language features, such as Norwegian intonation and sentence structure.

### **3. Teaching English in the global classroom**

#### **3.1 Teaching English in Norwegian Schools**

English has been a compulsory subject in Norwegian schools since the 1960s and has gained an influential position in education along with the international development of English. With the national curricula of 1997 (L97), English was introduced to Norwegian children in their first year of school. The English language has a unique place in the Norwegian school system, reflected by the interesting classification of the subject. Traditionally, English has been referred to as a foreign language, but with the Knowledge Promotion curriculum of 2006 (LK06)<sup>8</sup>, English was established as distinct from other foreign languages, such as Spanish, French or German. On their web pages, the Ministry of Education and Research emphasises the distinct position of English: “In Norway, English has a strong position as the first of foreign languages” (St.meld. [Rapport to the Government] 23, 2007-2008, *author's translation*). By characterising English as *the first of foreign languages*, the government recognises the influential position of English language in the Norwegian

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<sup>8</sup> L97 and LK06 can be found at [www.udir.no](http://www.udir.no)



society, and highlights the importance of English language learning in Norwegian schools. However, even though Norwegians are introduced to English at an early age and have completed at least ten years of English language studies by the time they finish lower secondary education, Norwegians do not formally qualify as ESL learners, and the English subject curriculum therefore refers to English as a foreign language.

The current English subject curriculum (LK06) is divided into three main subject areas: language learning, communication and culture, society and literature. In relation to oral use of English, none of the main areas states any preferred accent or pronunciation. Rather, various competence aims emphasise that students should learn English in order to communicate. After year 10, the competence aim states that the student should be able to “express himself/herself in writing and orally with some precision, fluency and coherence” (LK06). After another year of studies, the student shall be able to “express him/herself in writing and orally in a varied, differentiated and precise manner, with good progression and coherence” (LK06). Similarly, the educational system does not impose any formal pronunciation requirements on Norwegian English teachers. Teachers are allowed to teach English in whatever accent they happen to have, but are likely to aim at British English (BrE) or American English (AmE), as these are the standards teacher-training students learn in modules of phonology and linguistic studies at university and college level. The oral English of teachers may also have been influenced by travel, study abroad-experiences<sup>9</sup> and their personal attitudes towards different varieties of English. However, Norwegian adolescents are not only exposed to the English language at school; they are exposed to English through films, computer games, media and music, and may as such be influenced by other accents of English than the accent they hear in the English language classroom.

Even though the English subject curriculum has a clear preference for British and American literature and culture, the competence aims of LK06 includes an increased focus on aspects of global English compared to previous curricula. The subject area of culture, society and literature focusses on “developing knowledge about English as a world language with many areas of use” (LK06). Based on the increased focus on Global English, Rindal (2012) states that future teachers should be introduced to aspects of the global use of English during their teacher training, as to be better prepared to guide future learners through the diverse world of the English language:

Consequently, teacher education in Norway and other countries with similar English language conditions have a responsibility to make available recent and relevant research on English in the complex and globalising world, so that teachers can better meet the language needs among their learners, and if necessary, (re)consider how they think about language and English.

(Rindal 2012: 173)

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<sup>9</sup> The most popular English-speaking study-abroad destinations for Norwegian students: UK, Australia and the US. (SSB [Statistics Norway], see more at <http://www.ssb.no/a/aarbok/tab/tab-176.html>)

As teachers of the first of foreign languages, Norwegian English teachers follow a curriculum that does not state any preferences of accent or pronunciation beyond brief comments on fluency and proficiency. Teaching English with the accent they happen to have, teachers are also supposed to make their pupils aware of the diversity of English varieties they will meet outside the classroom.

### **3.2 Attitudes**

Attitude is an important notion in this thesis, as indicated by both title and research questions. However, the concept of attitudes is not easily defined, but a good starting point is the well-known definition from Oppenheim (1982), referring to attitudes as a mental component, expressed through various aspects of behaviour:

It is an inner component of mental life, which expresses itself, directly or indirectly, through much more obvious processes as stereotypes, beliefs, verbal statements or reactions, ideas and opinions, selective recall, anger or satisfaction or some other emotion and in various other aspects of behaviour.

(39)

Similarly, Allport (1954) describes an attitude as a “learned disposition to think, feel and behave toward a person, or object, in a particular way” (18-20). This definition emphasises attitudes as something that is learned, a notion supported by Garret (2010) who points to personal experiences and social environment as the most important sources for forming attitudes.

Garret (2010) divides attitudes into three components: cognition, affect and behaviour. Here, cognitive aspects concern beliefs about the world, affective aspects concern feelings towards something, and the behavioural component of attitudes is related to the predisposition to act in accordance with our judgements. Garret further connects these three components of attitudes with language use:

In terms of language, then, if we were considering a student’s attitude towards Spanish as a foreign language, we could talk about a cognitive component (she believes that learning Spanish will give her a deeper understanding of Spanish culture), an affective component (she is enthusiastic about being able to read literature written in Spanish), and a behavioural component (she is saving money to enrol on a Spanish course).

(2010:23)

The language we use, communicates something about who we are and how we want to be perceived, revealing qualities like social status, intelligence and friendliness. At the same time, everyone has opinions on how languages should be used: “People hold attitudes to language at all

its levels: for example, spelling and punctuation, words, grammar, accent and pronunciation, dialects and languages” (Garret 2010:2). Among the levels mentioned, Garret points out accent and pronunciation as “the most potent” and frequently investigated factors for deciding attitudes within language studies (ibid: 95-96). Within the field of sociolinguistics, the matched-guise technique have been the most used method to reconstruct information about attitudes towards linguistic phenomena, allowing researchers to point at the mismatch between communicated attitudes and behaviour. Here, studies have commonly suggested that standard forms are associated with prestige, both among L1 and L2 users (e.g. Labov 1966: Trudgill 2000; Rindal 2012). This thesis does not consider the conformity between expressed attitudes and actual linguistic behaviour, as it is concerned with exploring what prospective teachers’ reflections and reported positions reveal of conscious and subconscious attitudes towards accents of English.

### **3.3 Previous research on language attitudes and the non-native speaker**

As previously mentioned, few studies have covered attitudes and preferences among non-native speakers of English, and the research on Norwegian speakers of English is thus even more limited. There are, however, some studies addressing non-native teachers and learners' attitudes towards English in other European countries that provide interesting implications to the area of study. Because this thesis investigates attitudes among teacher-training students, research on language attitudes among both learners and teachers are viewed as relevant.

When teaching a new language, the standard model and norm of that language is often followed and used to assess level of competence. Studying language attitudes in Austria, Dalton-Puffer and colleagues (1997) found that learners reported negative attitudes towards their own non-native accent in English and a preference for the standard native accent with whom they were most familiar. However, the researchers point out a clear mismatch between desired L2 pronunciation and actual linguistic competence:

Although these native accents are firmly in place as models for EFL learning and teaching, the level of achievement amongst university students of English does not concur with the attitude patterns obtained in the study. The greater part of the learners do not seem to be able to attain the standard pronunciation they evaluate so positively.

(Dalton-Puffer et.al. 1997:126).

In her groundbreaking work on ELF-varieties, Jenkins has contributed with valuable insights into attitudes and preferences of non-native teachers and learners (e.g. 2006b, 2007). Through interviews and questionnaires, Jenkins found ambivalence and contradictions in the reported accent attitudes of non-native teachers, as the informants agreed that they would like to teach ELF-accent,

but simultaneously expressed persistent standard-language ideologies (Jenkins 2006b). Furthermore, Jenkins (2007) points to an ambivalent trend among non-native speakers to wish to project near-nativeness on themselves in order to be seen as successful learners and speakers on the one hand, while expressing a desire to project local identity in their English on the other (2009b). Despite this careful indication of an increased acceptance of ELF-varieties of English, Jenkins points out that non-native speakers mostly wish to conceal traces of their L1, and claims that we “cannot assume the existence of a straightforward desire to express membership of an international (ELF) community or an L1 identity in their L2 English” (Jenkins 2006b:87). Jenkins’ studies illustrates that the belief in native speaker ownership of English persists among non-native speakers, and she partially rejects her own predictions of a rapid shift in attitudes as a consequence of the increased focus on international uses of English over the last decade:

When I originally conceived this book, I had expected to find that in the years since the Publication of *The Phonology of English as an International language*, years in which so much has been said and written about ELF, there would have been a substantial shift in attitudes towards NS and NNS Englishes, and in particular, towards Englishes of the expanding circle, from where the majority of English speakers now come [...] however, things are moving rather more slowly.

(Jenkins 2007a:238)

Studying future teachers, Grau (2008) explores how globalisation is reflected in classrooms around the world, and argues that teachers seem to be moving away from native speaker norms faster than students are. Through questionnaires and discussions, her study explores attitudes towards Global English among prospective English teachers in Germany, focusing on pronunciation and grammar. In this study, future teachers communicated contradictory attitudes; they confirmed a clear preference for British or American pronunciation on the one hand, a notion found to be very much related to prestige. The participants emphasised that the objective of teaching should be mutual intelligibility, but objected to foreign accents of English when exposed to them. On the other hand, however, the teacher-training students showed an interest in and openness for international English that leads Grau (2008) to predict a shift of focus in English language teaching.

Focusing on accent attitudes among teachers in Italy, Lopriore (2010) questions the notion of “ownership” of English, challenging the ways English is taught in the global classroom: “A lingua franca approach, also termed a bilingual approach, would be focussed on cross-cultural communication and would accommodate cultural conventions and pragmatic norms that differ from Anglo-American norms” (Lopriore 2010: 76). Here, Lopriore argues that teacher education should provide students with an understanding of world Englishes and international varieties that makes them better prepared for becoming teachers. Similarly, Crystal (2001) calls for an increased focus on variation and diversity among both teachers and students:

Teachers need to prepare their students for a world of staggering linguistic diversity. Somehow, they need to expose them to as many varieties of English as possible (...) And above all, teachers need to develop a truly flexible attitude towards principles of usage. The absolutist concept of 'proper English' or 'correct English' which is so widespread, needs to be replaced by relativistic models in which literary and educated norms are seen to maintain their place alongside with other norms, some of which depart radically from what was once recognized as 'correct'.

(Crystal, 2001: 20)

Despite the increased focus on diversity and international varieties of English, several scholars support non-native speakers in their preference for standard norms. As Maley (2010) describes the situation: "[M]any cannot see any profit in killing the goose that lay the golden egg, namely a standard variety of English, in favour of installing a fledgling ugly duckling" (2010: 35). However, the standard-norm may be an unattainable ideal for the non-native teacher, as illustrated by Medyges (1994), who challenges negative attitudes towards non-native teachers, and claims that the native speaker ideal can lead to an inferiority complex among non-native teachers. However, Medyges emphasises that there are many advantages of being a non-native teacher, as they can be great models for language learning, have good insight in language learning strategies and the opportunity to use the common mother tongue when necessary. Kirkpatrick (2007) supports this notion in his discussion of different approaches available for the non-native teacher. Kirkpatrick argues that non-native teachers tend to either adopt an exonormative native speaker model, where the codified standard is followed and learners are tested against these codes, or the endonormative nativised model, where international varieties of English are used. The endonormative-nativised model is commonly used by "outer circle countries in which the local variety has become socially acceptable" (Kirkpatrick 2007: 189). However, he also encourages the use of a third model; the lingua franca approach based on a focus on "cross-cultural communication" (ibid: 193).

In a Norwegian context, Rindal (2012) has contributed with valuable insights to the literature on the non-native language learner with her research on L2 attitudes, choice and pronunciation. Here, Rindal found a preference for native varieties among the informants, as Norwegian learners of English reported a preference for BrE-pronunciation when asked, but were through auditory analysis found to aim at an American-influenced accent when speaking English. Furthermore, results from a matched-guise test revealed that Norwegian learners regarded British English as the most prestigious accent, while the American accent received the most favourable evaluation for social attractiveness. Thus, Rindal argues that Norwegian learners make conscious L2 choices based on evaluations of English varieties: "The results from the matched-guise test combined with speaker commentary suggest that the participants do in fact evaluate varieties of the L2, and make L2 choices based on these evaluations" (Rindal 2012: 9-10). Rindal further argues

that Norwegian students have a high level of L2 awareness, and claims that English teacher education has a responsibility to make their students aware of the different uses of English (2012).

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1 Choosing methods**

Results in this thesis are based on data from a questionnaire and five interviews, combining methods from both sides of the traditional divide between quantitative and qualitative research to provide an extensive insight into attitudes among teacher training students. Historically, the matched-guise technique has been the common method used to elicit accent attitudes within the field of sociolinguistics (i.e. Labov 1966; Trudgill 2000; Rindal 2012). However, this study is not concerned with the coherence between accent attitudes and actual language performance, but merely with attitudes that are expressed by the participants as they reflect on aspects of language use. In this study, in-depth interviews were considered the most appropriate method to apply when eliciting accent attitudes among prospective teachers, as this method allows informants to elaborate and reflect on their own statements. Additionally, the questionnaire provides a valuable foundation for further investigation.

Results from the questionnaire were intended to contribute with a general insight of attitudes among prospective teachers in Norway, offering material from a vast number of participants that could be used to draw generalisations and point towards trends. In contrast, the in-depth interviews investigate attitudes of five individual teacher-training students in more detail, allowing a complex elaboration on conscious and subconscious attitudes. The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is supported by Flick (2011), emphasising that qualitative and quantitative research can capture different aspects of the research object.

### **4.2 Methods**

#### **4.2.1 Questionnaires**

Results from the questionnaire are based on replies from 65 students, 18 male and 47 female. The informants are all teacher-training students, enrolled at three different Norwegian universities with English as one of their subjects, and with Norwegian as their L1. With valuable help from members of university staff, the questionnaire was distributed online to the eligible students. The link to the survey was distributed online together with brief information about the research and reassured the participants' of their anonymity.

The questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions, multiple-choice questions and simple

yes/no-questions<sup>10</sup>. The open-ended alternatives were included either as an opportunity to clarify, elaborate or specify, and can be regarded as short-answer questions as they only allowed a limited number of sentences (Dörnej 2007). All questions were made as clear and unambiguous as possible, and an open option for additional comments or clarifications was added towards the end of the questionnaire. In hindsight, the questionnaire should not have included questions with only three possible alternatives, making it convenient for the participants to put themselves in the neutral middle position. For instance, the question *Would you mind if people were to recognise the Norwegian accent in your English*, merely offered three alternatives; *yes very much*, *slightly* and *not at all*, and may have encouraged a majority to tick off the most neutral *slightly* without actually having to consider the two more decisive alternatives. In addition, several questions regarding varieties of English only offered British English, American English and Norwegian English as alternatives, even though other varieties, such as Australian English or South African English, may have been included. However, these varieties were considered most likely to be familiar to the participants, and the questionnaire offered an optional space of *other* where the participants could specify other accents.

#### 4.2.2 Interviews

The five interviewees are enrolled at a five-year teaching degree at a Norwegian university with English as their MA subject. The informants volunteered when the researcher visited a lecture in English didactics and asked if any students wanted to participate in a study on language attitudes among prospective English teachers. The students were not given considerable information about the thesis, as an extensive presentation of the research aims might bias the informants. The five participants have been provided with invented names based on their initial categorisation as interviewee A, B, C, D and E, as to ensure their anonymity:

**Anna:** Female (23), Norwegian is her L1. In her fifth year of the teaching degree. Has lived in an English-speaking country for 10 months.

**Berit:** Female (24), Norwegian is her L1. In her fifth year of the teaching degree.

**Christopher:** Male (23), Norwegian is his L1. In his fourth year of the teaching degree

**Dina:** Female (24), Norwegian is her L1. In her fifth year of the teaching degree.

**Erik:** Male (22), Norwegian is his L1. In his third year of the teaching degree.

The informants were asked to sign a consent form in advance of the interviews, agreeing to be recorded and ensured of their anonymity. The interviews were structured with open-ended

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<sup>10</sup> The questionnaire is included in *Appendix I*.

questions, where the prepared questions covered topics that the research aimed at investigating. Flick (2011) refers to open-ended questions as “semi structured” – that is “a number of questions are prepared that between them cover the intended scope of the interview” (112). This convenient structure allowed the conversation to dictate order and content, and led some interviewees to elaborate on topics that other interviewees did not mention. In addition, the first interview with Anna was initially intended to be considered a pilot interview, allowing the interviewer to make adjustments in advance of the other four interviews. However, the pilot interview with Anna has been included due to the interesting input she contributed to the thesis, even though the interview questions were somewhat adjusted after this interview was conducted.

The conversation between researcher and participants was naturally initiated in the common L1, and the interviews were therefore carried out in Norwegian. Thus, the participants avoided any possible complications involved in expressing attitudes towards L2 accents while constantly considering L2 accent use during the interview. Each of the interviews resulted in approximately twenty minutes of recorded speech, offering a wealth of valuable data. The recordings were transcribed and the excerpts considered to be most relevant to the research questions have been translated into English and are presented in the thesis. Rather than presenting a dominance of paraphrased statements, the thesis includes numerous quotes from the interviews in the thesis to better illustrate the attitudes expressed and to give the interviewees themselves a more significant voice in the thesis.

#### **4.3 Ethical concerns**

The five participants are more or less familiar to the researcher, being enrolled at the same teacher-training program. There are several concerns involved in conducting a peer study; among these are the potential difficulties of participants adjusting their utterances in order to satisfy the researcher and to befit the perceived intentions of the thesis. However, the participants were not given extensive insight into the research aims but were merely told that the study would investigate language attitudes among prospective teachers. Furthermore, the interviewees may also have been able to express themselves more freely to someone who is familiar to them and has a first-hand understanding of their teacher-training studies.

As the interviews were conducted in Norwegian, the most relevant excerpts from the transcribed material have been translated into English. The excerpts have been directly translated where possible, making only small adjustments to maintain the essence of the meaning in each utterance. However, creating equivalent meaning in a different language can be challenging and traces of the original meaning may have been lost in translation. Therefore, it is important to emphasise that any poor formulations are completely the translators' responsibility. Furthermore, it



is important to stress that the extensive data from the in-depth interviews represent personal attitudes of five individual teacher-training students, and these views cannot be generalised to the same extent as the more extensive data from the questionnaire. The results are discussed as objectively as possible; however, the presented materials are ultimately interpretations made by the researcher.

## **5. Results**

The results from the questionnaire and the in-depth interviews can be divided into three main areas, based on the three research questions in this thesis:

- a) What attitudes do prospective English teachers have towards their own English accent?
- b) What are their attitudes towards accents used by teachers and learners of English in Norwegian classrooms?
- c) What are their attitudes towards international varieties of English, including Norwegian-influenced English?

### **5.1 Questionnaire**

#### **5.1.1 Attitudes towards their own English accent**

To elicit prospective teachers' attitudes towards their own English, the questionnaire investigated the participants' accent aims, satisfaction with their accent and degree of desire to sound more native-like when speaking English. Respondents were initially asked what they would say has influenced their English the most. This question can illustrate to what degree former English teachers are considered as an important source of influence, or if media, travel or other factors are perceived as more influential. The question included an option of *other, please specify*, and the participants were able to choose more than one alternative.

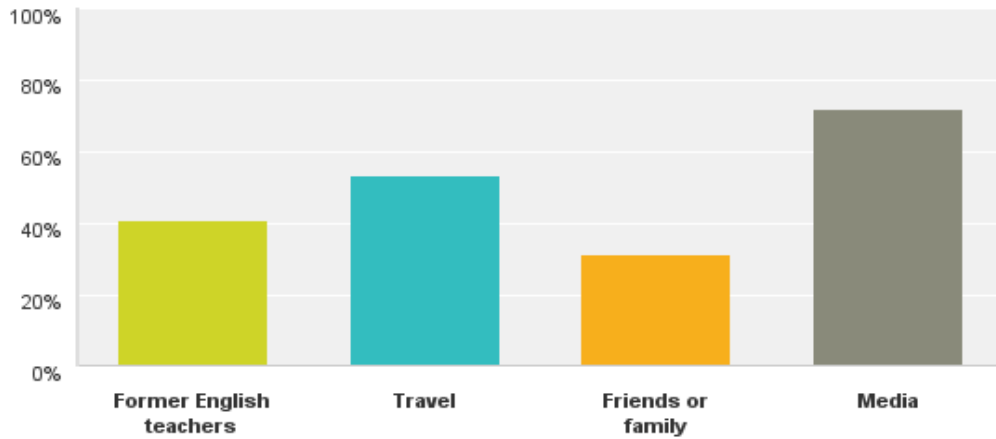


Figure 2: What would you say has influenced your English the most?

As Figure 2. illustrates, a majority clearly view media as an important influence on their English, and several participants used the commentary slot to emphasise that computer games had formed their English the most. Here, the participants may have interpreted the slightly imprecise question differently, as either asking what they would say has influenced their accent and the way they speak English, or what has influenced their English proficiency the most.

When asked which accent they are aiming at when speaking English, the participants demonstrate a clear preference for standard varieties with a majority aiming at an American English accent. In this question, the word *aiming* is used to emphasise their preferred accent, not considering whether or not the participants actually use this accent when speaking English:

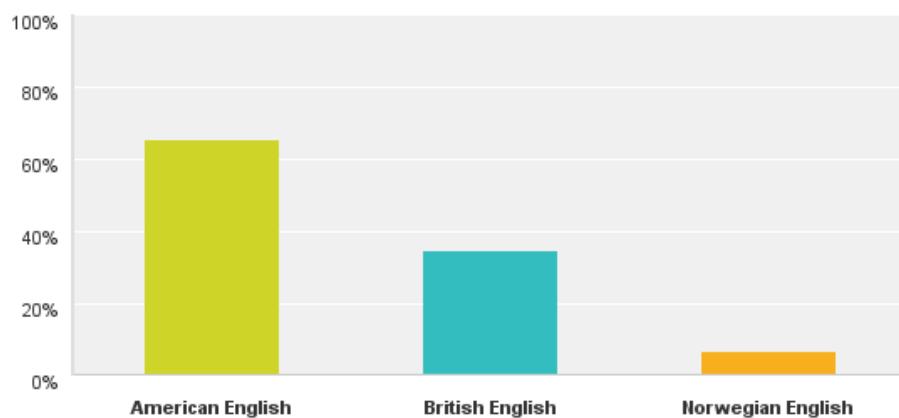


Figure 3: Which accent are you aiming at when you speak English?

Intentionally, this question did not offer any definition of Norwegian English in order to give the participants the opportunity to interpret this term as they choose. Rather surprisingly, more than 6% 20

of the participants report that they aim at a Norwegian English accent, implying that they desire to speak with an accent influenced by non-native features from Norwegian. The question also included an option of "other" where participants could specify, mention other accents or elaborate. Here, some participants explained why they aim at an American English accent rather than the British English:

*<sup>11</sup>I feel that very few Norwegians who aim at British English do so with success. I think it sounds artificial.*

*It becomes a mix. Ideally, I would stay with British English but the American accent is naturally internalized.*

Asked if they are satisfied with their English, more than 92% of the participants reply being either very or quite satisfied. This level of contentment might be expected of those studying English at university level, yet 8% are either not very satisfied or unsatisfied with their English. The question did not specify any specific aspects of English, and the participants may therefore have considered their satisfaction with both oral and written English, as well as their knowledge of English language in general.

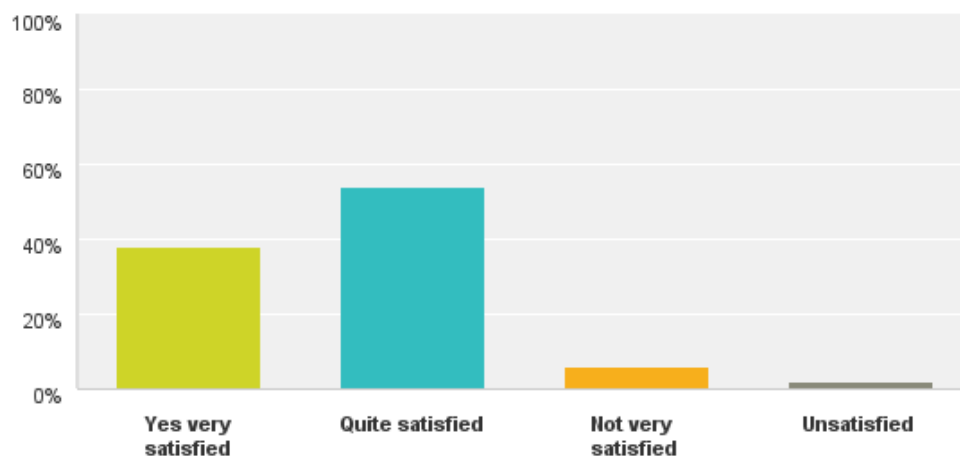


Figure 4: Are you satisfied with your English?

Even though the participants appear to be generally satisfied with their English, more than 88% reply that they would like to sound more native-like when they speak English.

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<sup>11</sup> I have provided a polish on some of the included comments from the questionnaire, correcting minor misspellings and grammatical errors.

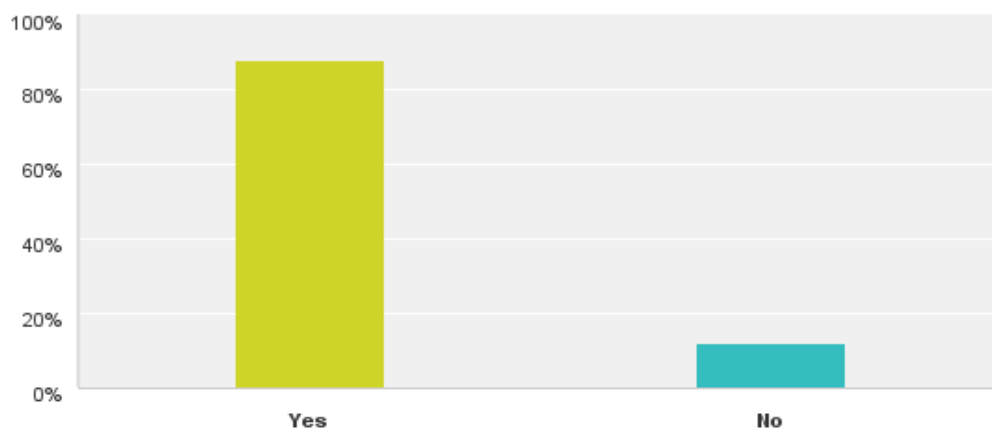


Figure 5: Would you like to sound more “native-like” when you speak English (i.e. more American/ British)?

This trend points towards an interesting conflict between being both satisfied with the English they have, and at the same time having a desire to sound more like a native speaker when they speak English. This trend is further emphasised in the following question, *To what extent would you say that it is important to maintain your Norwegian accent in your English?* Here, more than 90% of the informants reply that they do not consider it as important to maintain a Norwegian accent in their English, indicating that a majority of the participants do not intentionally speak with a Norwegian-accented English.

Furthermore, 68% of the participants confirm that they would mind very much or slightly if people were to recognise the Norwegian origin in their English accent, with 32% saying that they would not mind at all. As an evident weakness, this question only offered three alternatives, making it convenient for participants to put themselves in the middle position of “slightly.” Here, it would have been interesting to let the participants elaborate further and explain how they would react if identified as Norwegian.

### 5.1.2 Attitudes towards accents used by teachers and learners of English in Norwegian schools

To get an understanding of prospective teachers’ attitudes towards English used in the classroom, the questionnaire asked them to state which accent they think should be preferred when teaching English in Norwegian schools. The question was somewhat unclear, as it did not specify any reference to the accent used by the teachers exclusively, and the responses indicate that some informants may have interpreted the question as including both teachers and students. The informants were allowed to choose more than one option, and the results indicate a significant preference for both American English and British English, with more than 70% each. However, more than 14% reply that a Norwegian English accent should be preferred. This is an interesting finding, as only 6% of the participants reported that they would aim at such an accent themselves.

This significant contrast may have been influenced by a misinterpretation of the question as one pointing to both teachers and learners.

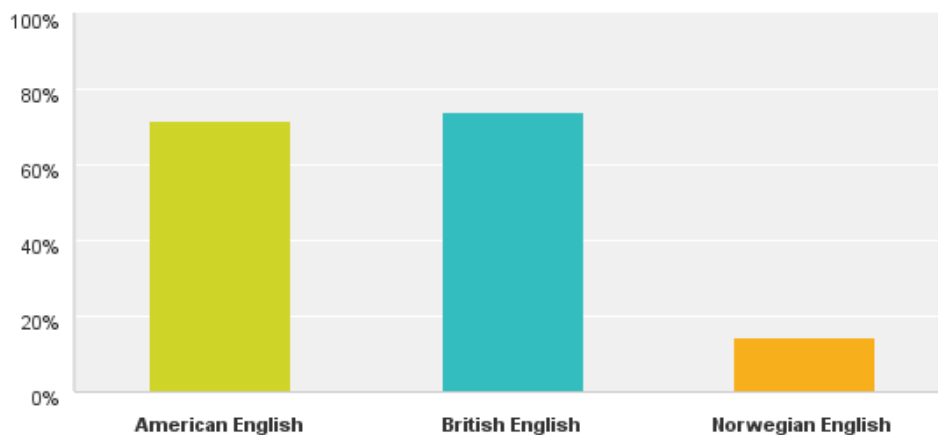


Figure 6: In your opinion, which accent should be preferred when teaching English in Norwegian schools (you may choose more than one option)

The question was followed up by an optional slot where informants could elaborate or specify other accents they would prefer. Here, some participants emphasised that students should be made aware of different varieties, and that understandable accents should be favoured. Others pointed towards native varieties of English as the ideal:

*I would suggest British accent and fake it till you make it.*

*Any kind of native variety is fine.*

When asked which accent they would encourage their future pupils to aim at, the informants demonstrated a similar preference for standard varieties. British English was favoured with more than 74%, while an interesting 17% of prospective English teachers said they would encourage future students to aim at Norwegian English. This number is significantly higher than the 6% reporting that they aim at a Norwegian English accent themselves. The contrast points out a divergence in prospective teachers' personal accent aims on the one hand, and their accent aims on behalf of their learners on the other:

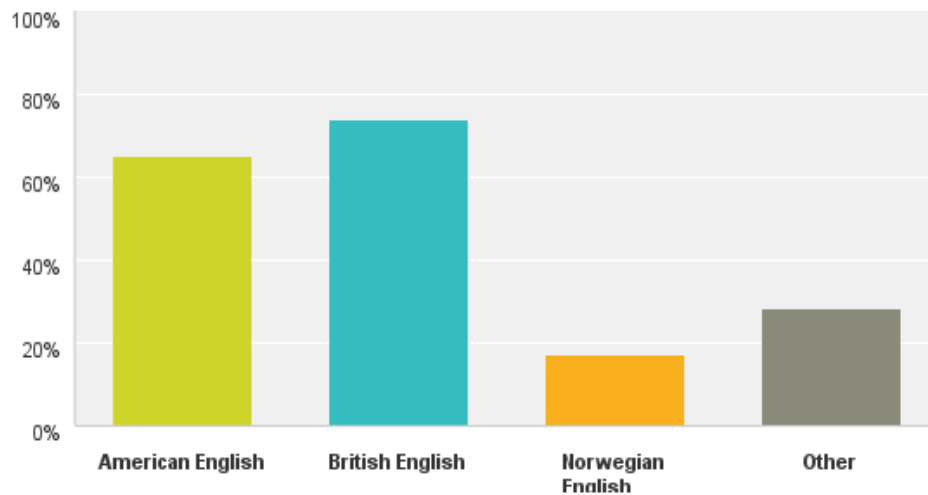


Figure 5: What kind of English accent would you encourage your future students to aim at (you can choose more than one option)?

In the comments, several informants emphasised that communication and understanding should be encouraged among learners of English:

*I believe the most important thing is to focus on communication and understanding*

*Whatever they feel comfortable with – just talk.*

Other informants explained why they would encourage future students to aim at a standard variety of English, illustrating a view on near-nativeness as the goal for English language learners:

*When trying to learn another language, one should try to pronounce it, make use of it, in a way close to the native speaker of that language.*

*Because first-language English is usually seen as “perfect” English by both native speakers and second language learners.*

*Although it is ok for them to sound a bit Norwegian, I think it is best to aim at near-nativeness.*

Considering whether or not they think a native speaker of English would make a better teacher in Norwegian schools, a majority of 76% reply that a native speaker can be either much better or somewhat better than a Norwegian English teacher, with 32% replying “not at all”. In the slot of commentaries, some informants argue in favour of the native English teacher, pointing to the native speaker as a source of good language input:

*Interacting with a native speaker when learning a language is always better than trying to*

*learn it from someone who does not speak fluently.*

*I have the opinion that students should be exposed to as much native pronunciation as possible.*

Others point to the many advantages of being a Norwegian English teacher in Norwegian schools:

*Norwegian English teachers have the advantage of knowing Norwegian and its potential “traps” better than an English native speaker.*

*[...] a non-native speaker could be less intimidating, and could be better apt to explain language differences.*

The included comments generally illustrate that future teachers consider native speakers to be a more useful source for correct language input than themselves as Norwegian teachers can provide. However, the participants point at having learned English as a second language as a clear advantage of being a non-native English teacher.

### **5.1.3 Attitudes towards varieties of English**

To elicit attitudes towards different varieties of English, the questionnaire provided a table of eight varieties where informants wrote a word or phrase that they associate with the various accents. Because several of these accents are not recognised as varieties of English in their own right, the question could have provided a more detailed specification of the various accents. However, the unspecified terms allowed participants to write down associations based on their initial intuitive understanding of the terms without any consideration of formal definitions:

**American English:** *rude, sloppy, dominant, loud, friendly, outgoing, relaxed, easy, cowboy,*

**Indian English:** *funny, exotic, difficult to understand*

**Swedish English:** *awkward, embarrassing, funny, childish, stereotyped*

**French English:** *horrible, poor, accent, very bad*

**Chinese English:** *misunderstandings, poor, difficult to understand*

**Norwegian English:** *funny, awkward, embarrassing, charming, underestimated, Jagland, underrated, understandable, melodious*

**British English:** *beautiful, comfortable, classy, posh, educated, polite, stuck-up*

These connotations provide an interesting snapshot of accent attitudes, and demonstrate how competent non-native speakers can evaluate different varieties of English. Even though the British English accent certainly received the most favoured associations, the Norwegian English accent was

associated with quite a few positive remarks, described as both *charming* and *underestimated*. At the same time, other international varieties received mostly negative connotations, with both Chinese English and French English being associated with words like *horrible* and *poor*. The favourable judgement of British English was further emphasised in the following responses, where the informants were asked to list the three accents of English they like the most. Here, a majority listed various British accents as their favourite, including Scottish. Many also listed American as their favourite accent, while Irish, Australian and South African were mentioned.

When asked if they have studied any topics of English as a Lingua Franca, Global English or World Englishes as part of their teacher training, all students confirm that they are familiar with the terms, and more than 68% replied that they have studied these topics. These responses give important indications of participants' knowledge of aspects regarding Global English, and illustrate to what extent these topics are offered to students of English at Norwegian universities.

The results from the questionnaire offer a general impression of attitudes towards English among Norwegian teacher-training students. In the following, prospective teachers' attitudes will be explored in more detail with results from the in-depth interviews.

## 5.2 In-depth interviews<sup>12</sup>

### 5.2.1 Attitudes towards their own English accent

When asked who or what they think have influenced their English the most, the five teacher-training students mention various components, among these media, online gaming, family and study abroad-experiences. Here, the participants may have interpreted the question differently, either as asking what they would say has influenced their accent or the way they speak English, or what has influenced their level of English proficiency. Dina points to watching soap operas as a child as a great influence, being an important reason to why she “fell in love with English”. Additionally, they all mention former English teachers as having influenced both their proficiency in English and their attitudes towards English. Berit remembers her former teacher favouring the British accent, even though the teacher spoke with a Norwegian-influenced accent herself:

*Teachers. From day one at lower secondary school, it was made very clear that “If you want a good grade, you must speak with an American or British accent” and it was obvious that our teacher preferred British. That was the only accent that really mattered [...] She didn't speak that well herself....it was no doubt she was Norwegian. But we had to talk British.*

Discussing the influence of former English teachers, Christopher mentions teachers at upper secondary as being the most inspirational:

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<sup>12</sup> The five interviewees are presented in section 4.2.2.



*Because up until then, English teachers had been more like “Oh well, so I guess I’ll teach English.” It wasn’t really that important to them, I think. No, they weren’t real English teachers, sort of [...] But in upper secondary we had a teacher who talked English very well. That was inspiring.*

When asked which accent they aim at when they speak English, all five participants point to a native variety of English. The question pointed towards desired accent, and as the interviews were carried out in Norwegian, the participants did not have to worry about the correlation between accent aims and actual accent use. In her reply, Anna says she aims at a “standard west-coast American”, describing it as a “neutral” accent. Similarly, both Christopher and Dina reply that they aim at a neutral American accent, and emphasise that they are more exposed to American than other varieties of English through media and entertainment. However, Christopher and Dina add that they have a fascination for British, but that the British accent feels slightly artificial:

*When I was younger, I had a great desire to speak with a British accent; I’ve always had a weakness for British. But it sounds a bit artificial, it’s easier to go for the American...I’ve heard more of it. (Dina)*

*I sometimes like to speak as British as possible, but it ends up sounding like a Monty Python-parody, very exaggerated. (Christopher)*

Considering which accent she aims at when she speaks English, Berit emphasises that her accent aims are context-dependent, illustrating her ability to make conscious accent choices in accordance with the context:

*When I speak English as an English teacher, I aim at British. That said, I don’t always speak British when I speak English. I can also use a more lingua-franca variety of English [...] I know I speak with an American-influenced accent when I don’t pay attention, because it is all around us... But if I am “to speak English” then I go for British.*

Berit’s reflections on accent aims demonstrate the complex competence of a second language speaker who claims that she can switch between available varieties and adapt her language to different roles and settings. Furthermore, Berit emphasises that her language choices are closely linked to attitudes and evaluations of different varieties, as illustrated by the favourable description of the British accent she aims at:

*It’s what has been the most prestigious [...] I sort of associate it with a real RP accent, that accent means you’re intelligent, sophisticated, you’re in control. Also, you can be really amusing. It’s not necessarily like that, but that’s what I associate with it.*

In contrast, Erik points at the uncertainty he feels when it comes to his oral English, as he was never

encouraged to learn a particular accent at school. Therefore, Erik does not know which accent he speaks or aims at and says that he is rather ashamed of his accent:

*I try to be correct, but that's the problem, I've never had any training in American or British, just in being accurate. [...] I'm a bit ashamed of my English, I'd like a proper accent.*

Erik states that he is ashamed of his accent because it is not “a proper accent”, by which he most likely means that he does not have a standard accent. However, despite the concerns regarding his oral English, Erik is not unsatisfied with his English competence in general:

*I'm quite satisfied, but I'm very aware that there are things I have to work on.*

Similarly, Dina replies that she is mostly satisfied with her English, but says she can be too critical towards her oral English in certain settings:

*I know there are things I can improve... For instance, I have a tendency to get very insecure when I use English in a formal setting. In those settings, I notice that I speak with a more Norwegian English accent because I'm so nervous. In those situations, I wish I could just relax and stop worrying about being grammatically correct.*

The other participants express a greater degree of confidence when asked if they are satisfied with their English in general. Berit emphasises that there might be things she needs to work on, but that her English is satisfactory in regards to her role as teacher:

*As an English teacher, I'm right where I should be.*

Even though the interviewees express an overall satisfaction with their English, the five teacher-training students convey a strong desire for their accent to be more native-like. When asked if they would like their accent to sound more like that of a native speaker, Anna confirms that it is her ambition to imitate the American accent as closely as possible:

*I'm thinking; the more you can fake it, the better.*

Similarly, Erik confirms that he would like to sound more like a native speaker and says that teachers with a more native-like accent may be more inspiring for students of English. Here, Erik makes a link between good teachers and a native-like accent:

*Definitely, I think it's just... the better you are, the more of an inspiration you are to your students. You notice that, if you have a teacher that speaks with a Norwegian English accent, you get a bit baffled.*

Like the others, Dina says she aims at sounding like a native speaker, but emphasises her

ambivalent opinion of the native ideal by saying that understanding should be the focus:

*Yes, it's definitely an ambition, I do aim at that when I speak [...] At the same time, I've gotten a bit like... I've noticed that the most important thing is to express oneself in a good way and that other people understand what I mean, not necessarily that I sound like a native-speaker.*

In connection with their communicated desire to sound more native-like, the participants were asked how they would react if someone had mistaken them for a native speaker of English. The five interviewees agree that being mistaken for a native speaker is a great compliment, as illustrated by Berit's reply:

*I have been mistaken for a native speaker and that was the proudest moment of my life.*

Further discussing her preference for the British English accent, Berit introduces the notion of putting on a role when she speaks British, explaining why she does not aim at a perfect British accent in the classroom.

*There's no doubt that I play a role when I put on the British accent [...] I'm not as laid-back, I'm more strict [...] But I've realised that it is difficult for me to combine the perfect British accent with being a teacher, because they're two separate things, two different characters... I have to do quite a lot of acting to pull off the real British accent. That person doesn't match me as a teacher.*

Like Berit, Christopher says that English is an important part of his identity, but that he somehow feels like a different person when he talks English. Again, this statement points towards the notion of putting on a role when speaking a second language:

*[...] English is around me all the time, so the language is kind of like a part of me. But once I open my mouth and speak English I somehow feel like I don't recognise myself... that I kind of turn into a different person when I talk.*

Dina recognises the feeling of putting on a role, but says English has become a great part of her as she has started using English more regularly. Here, the participants introduce the notion of accent and identity being closely intertwined, and point towards a self-conscious use of second language accents.

## **5.2.2 Attitudes towards accents used by teachers and learners of English in Norway**

### **5.2.2.1 Accents used by teachers**

To elicit attitudes towards teaching English in Norwegian schools, the participants were asked to consider which accent they think should be preferred by themselves as teachers, or English teachers

in Norwegian schools more generally. All five interviewees say they would favour a standard accent, but some of the participants instantly move on to emphasise that the most important thing is for teachers to be understood by their students. This ambivalence is reflected in Berit's reply, where both a standard RP and the focus on communication is preferred in the same utterance:

*I'll prefer a standard RP, there's no doubt I'm speaking with a British accent, but again, it's the communication that is the main focus. I'm thinking yes, it's important that they get correct input, but then again, it's important that we can communicate, that they won't feel that they can't say anything unless it's perfect.*

Dina would prefer teachers to use a standard variety, but states that the most important thing is for students to understand their teacher and that they are made aware of different accents of English. Remembering her former English teachers striving to sound British, Dina points towards a move away from the focus on standard varieties:

*When we were younger, our teachers strived to sound British. It was a lot of that. But now, I'm thinking that the most important thing is that students understand you [...] The most important thing is not the accent of the teacher, but that students are made aware the different use of English and the existence of different accents.*

Christopher says teachers should aim at traditional accents of English in order to be an *inspiration* for their students, and states that a native-like accent can make the English subject *more fun*. In his opinion, teachers ought to avoid the Norwegian-influenced English:

*As a teacher, I think you should aim at what you're comfortable with. Also, I think teachers should reach a bit further, because it'll make the subject more fun for the students if your English is good, right? So if you have a broken Norwegian-English accent, you should get to a level where students can see you as an inspiration. So I think we should aim at the traditional accents of English.*

In his concise reply, Erik says the most important thing is for teachers to be consistent in their choice of English accent. However, his definition of English appears to point towards standard varieties exclusively:

*As long as you're consistent and as long as it's English.*

When asked if they feel confident that they will make good English teachers, the five interviewees confirm this, saying they have the sufficient competence to become good teachers. However, some of the participants express a desire to keep evolving as a teacher. Dina emphasises that there are aspects of the English language she may never learn, being a non-native speaker:

*I always try to evolve, and, well, it's not my mother tongue so there will always be some things that I don't know and can't teach, but I think I have the sufficient level of competence to become a good teacher.*

Like Dina, Berit does not view her English competence as perfect, but says that she has the competence to be a good English teacher:

*We kind of learn that as an English teacher you sort of have to be perfect – really proficient in English. But then, you get out in the real world and think “Yeah, well, is it really that important?” As long as you are good enough.*

When considering whether or not they think a native speaker would make a better English teacher in Norwegian schools than themselves, the five participants agree that non-native teachers may have many advantages, while emphasising that language learners can benefit from native speaker input. However, they all see the advantage of being non-native second language speakers themselves:

*From time to time we'll have to use the dictionary to figure out how something should be conjugated, and a native speaker would know that intuitively. The same with cultural aspects... But we know the Norwegian part and we're teaching Norwegian students, so we would lose something there. Yeah, I think there are pros and cons. (Anna)*

*Yes and no. Yes because they have a knowledge of the language that I'll never have. At the same time, I think not, because if you have Norwegian as a starting point, you know more about what the languages have in common [...] (Dina)*

#### **5.2.2.2 Accent used by learners of English**

Following their discussion on accents used by teachers in Norwegian schools, the five teacher-training students were asked which accent of English they would encourage future students to aim at. In her response, Anna states that she would not encourage students to aim at a native variety of English before they are at a certain level of proficiency. Here, she speaks of Norwegian-influenced English as an indication of the language learning process, accepted only when used by students, presumably, at a lower level of proficiency:

*But I don't think I will encourage students to adopt some kind of native English accent before they are past a level when I think they can pull it off. So, there's a lot of Norwegian English in schools, and I think that's okay, among students. They are, after all students.*

In her reflections, Berit emphasises that students should be allowed to speak with a Norwegian-influenced English as long as it does not hinder communication. Here, she refers to the link between written form and pronunciation, saying she would encourage students to be consistent:

*I'll encourage British or American, as it has a lot to do with the written form [...] If you wish to aim at a British accent, you should use British spelling. Also, it doesn't really matter if people recognise the Norwegian in their English. As long as they speak well and manage to communicate – that's more important than speaking with a perfect accent [...] However, when I hear Thorbjørn Jagland on the TV, it really hurts me inside. So I want my students to have a better pronunciation than Jagland.*

Berit's comment illustrates a range of conflicting attitudes, as she starts out by emphasising that native-like accents should be encouraged among pupils, before moving on to claim that pupils should be encouraged to communicate without letting a Norwegian-influenced accent restrict them, and moves on to point out that the Norwegian-influenced English should not be as evident as Thorbjørn Jagland's<sup>13</sup>.

Demonstrating a clear preference for native-like accents, Christopher replies that he would encourage students to aim at an accent that lets them express themselves, but adds that the goal should be to move away from a Norwegian-influenced accent. Again, Norwegian English is referred to as a somewhat imperfect accent associated with a lower level of proficiency:

*Whatever comes naturally. Whether it's American or British doesn't matter, just go for the accent with the best flow, the accent that let you express yourself with your vocabulary. But they also have to recognise that Norwegian accents have nothing to do in their English. Hopefully, you lose that Norwegian-English accent eventually, when you work on it.*

Dina would encourage students to aim at a standard variety of English, saying it can be good for students to strive towards something. However, she demonstrates somewhat ambivalent attitudes by immediately adding that communication should be in focus, not a perfect accent.

*If you hear that a student is leaning a bit towards American, I'm thinking go for it, let them strive towards something [...] I have to admit, I favour aiming at a native variety. At the same time, I think that as long as you can make yourself understood [...] You don't need to sound like a native speaker to make yourself understood.*

### **5.2.3 Attitudes towards international varieties of English**

#### **5.2.3.1 Norwegian-influenced English**

Eliciting attitudes towards international varieties of English among the five interviewees, the questions were mainly centred on the participants' attitudes towards Norwegian-influenced English and their thoughts on international communication. Initially, the five teacher-training students were asked if they ever put on a Norwegian accent intentionally when speaking English. Here, Anna answers that she only puts on a Norwegian accent in certain situations:

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<sup>13</sup> Thorbjørn Jagland; Chair of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee

*It lowers the expectations a bit... For instance, when I ask for directions and such abroad, I'll put on a Norwegian English accent.*

Anna's reply demonstrates the ability to use a foreign-marked accent in contexts where she does not wish to be mistaken for a native speaker of English, but rather emphasise her non-nativeness. Like Anna, Christopher rarely puts on a Norwegian accent, but says that if he ever does, it is only for a humorous effect:

*I don't put on a Norwegian English accent on purpose, no. I try to stick to the English idioms and all that. If I put in some Norwegian it's just for fun, directly translating things, you know. Just for the humorous effect.*

Berit's reply corresponds with this notion, as she may also put on a Norwegian-influenced English for the humorous effect. However, Berit adds that she sometimes intentionally use Norwegian-influenced English with other non-native speakers who are at a lower level of proficiency than herself, arguing that the foreign-accented English may be easier to understand:

*Yes, and in that context it doesn't really matter. The most important thing is communication.*

Although she puts on a Norwegian-influenced English in certain contexts, Berit emphasises that she is not very fond of the Norwegian English accent. To her, the accent carries many unflattering associations:

*It's just that Norwegian English may sound less intelligent. It sounds like you're not in control; it sounds like a parody. It sounds less serious.*

When asked whether or not they would mind if people were to recognise them as Norwegian through their English accent, the participants expressed a certain degree of ambivalence. This ambivalence is reflected in Anna's reply, where she initially states that it would be okay to be recognised as Norwegian:

*Yeah, but I hope they don't.*

To elaborate, she explains how she would react if anyone identified the Norwegian accent in her English when she stayed in the US:

*[...] I would get a bit miffed if I was at a party, and someone got from my accent that I wasn't from around there. Then I was like "But I'm trying! Why doesn't it work?" I think it is... I don't think it has anything to do with English being more prestigious than Norwegian or anything. It's more that when I learn something I want to learn that thing properly.*

To Anna, being spotted as non-native appears to be interpreted as slightly humiliating, pointing out her English as flawed and not “learned properly”. Her association of Norwegian-influenced English with *bad English* may explain this notion:

*To me, Norwegian English is associated with bad vocabulary and in that setting also with bad teachers. But, I also think that the more English you learn, the more you lose the Norwegian accent...at least many will. So, that makes Norwegian-English connected with...or it kind of has a sign of equation with “does not know the language very well”. So the few times I meet people who speak English with a Norwegian accent but who are very fluent in English, I get a bit like “Wow! Is that possible?”*

Similarly, Dina can get annoyed if someone mentions the Norwegian accent in her English, interpreting the remark as affirming her accent as imperfect:

*Sometimes yes. [...] I get a bit like “I’m doing my very best.” Worst thing is, I pick at my own accent, but when friends speak English with a distinct Norwegian accent, I’m like “No, just talk, the most important thing is to just talk.”*

Resembling Dina’s reply, Erik says that it can be quite embarrassing if someone points at traces of Norwegian in his accent, as he would interpret this remark as identifying his English as inadequate. However, he adds that he recognises the benefits of being made aware of the Norwegian features in his accent:

*I think it’s both embarrassing and a good thing. A good thing because it can help me adjust the accent. But also, I think it’s very embarrassing if I speak to a Brit and say like “I’m doing a MA in English because I think I’m good at it”, sounding so Norwegian compared to that Brit. It’s not a great feeling, this being what I’m good at, and in some ways, I’m not really that good at it.*

In contrast, Berit states that she would not mind if people were to recognise a Norwegian accent in her English, knowing that she often includes Norwegian features into her English.

*It’s not really that bad, no. You can hear it when I’m excited, in intonation and words and expressions.*

Unlike Berit, Christopher is confident that his English does not reveal many traces of Norwegian, and would therefore be rather surprised if anyone were to identify his Norwegian origin:

*I think, being as satisfied with my English as I am, I think I would get a bit like “Oh really, how did you spot me?” But I get that when you’re not a native speaker, it’s hard to wipe out all the Norwegian from your language.*



Christopher further explains that he is not particularly fond of Norwegian-accented English:

*Being quite proficient in English, I think it's a bit awkward when you can hear the Norwegian accents in English, it sound a bit like a parody, right?*

### 5.2.3.2 International use of English

In relation to the discussion on Norwegian-influenced English, the participants were asked if they considered international varieties, like Norwegian English, Chinese English or French English, to be generally accepted by native and non-native speakers of English. They were further asked if they would say international varieties hindered communication. In her reflections, Anna says that many Norwegians frown upon the Norwegian-influenced English, as it may be interpreted as flawed. She further describes NNS-NNS communication as rather chaotic:

*I don't know, I don't think it really matters what people around the world do – it depends more on how we perceive ourselves. This Norwegian “we have to be best in everything-attitude” is quite pervaded in our society [...] But when two people who are non-native English speakers communicate... it gets a bit chaotic, wherever should we go?*

Like Anna, Dina says that international varieties may hinder communication if the English is strongly influenced by non-native accents. Dina also points towards a general desire among Norwegians to be proficient in English, but thinks that it is a growing trend to ignore the Norwegian accent and focus on successful communication:

*I think Norway... we like being good in English, we like not sounding Norwegian. And it has something to do with... we hear so much English, on TV and in movies and TV-series and such, so that might make us wish we sounded like them. But at the same time, I'm thinking it's a trend now, a growing trend, that people don't care so much about the Norwegian accent [...] Everyone's kind of focusing on communication being the... it's not the standard that is most important.*

Similarly, Berit says successful communication should be the goal of English language use, and would encourage increased acceptance of lingua franca-accented. However, she emphasises that she will not teach her future pupils lingua franca varieties, as they should have a standard to aim at:

*I'm thinking, as long as you communicate that's good enough. However, I won't teach my future students Norwegian English, I'm not going to teach them French English either. Because it's good to have a standard to aim at. Either American or British. It would be great if lingua franca accents were more accepted, but I won't teach them.*

Berit continues with an interesting elaboration on her preference for standard varieties, explaining that she thinks international varieties should be appreciated, but that she also feels that non-native speakers should aim at *English*, that is, American or British:

*It's British and American you associate with English; that's where the books come from, that's where the movies come from. We're brought up to think "this is English" [...] I'm thinking that attitudes towards lingua franca accents should change, but the goal should be the same; British or American.*

This utterance points towards an interesting inconsistency between both wanting to encourage greater acceptance of lingua franca accents, and at the same time promoting standard varieties in the language-learning classroom. Christopher expresses a similar view on native varieties as *real English*, holding that non-native speakers should honour the deep roots of the English language by observing standard norms. Like Berit's reply, Christopher's reflections demonstrate an interesting view on native speaker ownership of the English language:

*Fair enough that ELF is a thing and all that, but English is one of the languages in the world too, it has deep roots and I think one should honour that [...] Yeah, that's what makes it unique, having some guidelines, some instructions you have to stick to. And if everything just drifts, that it just floating and you can mix some L1 into your English, then you lose some of that uniqueness.*

Finally, the interviewees were asked if they had studied any subjects devoted to aspects of World English, English as a Lingua Franca or Global English, and to reflect on whether their teacher training had somewhat altered their views on English as an international language. All five interviewees confirm that they know what the terms entail, but only Dina and Erik have studied modules devoted to these topics. Berit gives a particularly interesting reply as she reflects on how her attitudes towards English varieties have changed from a predisposed preference for British English towards a greater acceptance of other varieties:

*Well, when I first started studying the teaching program, I thought that British was the only thing that was right. At the back of my head, I really thought that American was silly. And it didn't even hit me that we might approve of anything else than British, and perhaps American. Norwegian English was like, before, it was like, only for people who hadn't worked hard enough. I was terribly arrogant really. It has changed.*

In her reflections, Dina points out that a module on Global English made her more aware of different varieties and the international use of English, but adds that she still is of the opinion that English should be spoken correctly, following the conventional norms:

*It made me think differently about the use of English, as I was very focused on speaking correct English before. Now, I might view English more as a tool used to communicate with people from all around the world. [...] At the same time, I still think English should be used in a correct way, that notion sticks.*

## **6. Discussion**

In this discussion, results will be further explored in relation to the main research questions presented in chapter 1 and the theoretical background presented in chapter 3. As stated in chapter 4, results from the interviews will be the main source of interest in this discussion, considering results from the questionnaire as a valuable foundation used to point out trends and compare with findings from the in-depth interviews.

The discussion is divided into three main sections, exploring what the results indicate about prospective teachers' attitudes towards their own English accent, accents used by teachers and learners in Norwegian classrooms, and attitudes towards international varieties of English, focusing mainly on Norwegian-influenced English. However, the results are closely related and relevant findings will therefore be combined in different sections of the discussion. As the thesis is greatly inspired by Jennifer Jenkins' predictions of a shift in accent attitudes among non-native teachers (eg.. 2007, 2009a), the ambivalent relationship between the native speaker ideal for pronunciation and the growing focus on acceptance of international varieties of English, will be a common thread in the discussion.

### **6.1 Attitudes towards their own English accent**

#### **6.1.1 The native speaker ideal**

Results from the questionnaire and interviews reveal prospective teachers' ambivalent attitudes towards their own English accent. On the one hand, future teachers declare a general satisfaction with their English competence, but on the other hand; the participants express a great desire to sound more like a native speaker of the standard accent they aim at. These findings demonstrate that the native ideal may not be as demotivating for non-native speakers as predicted by Cook (2002), referring to the native ideal as "an impossible target" for L2 learners and teachers (331). The participants' strong desire to sound native-like does not appear to have a considerable influence on the general satisfaction with their English.

The majority of teacher training students in this study state that they aim at either British or American when they speak English, depending on which accent they have been exposed to the most. Here, the American accent is preferred by a majority of the informants in both the questionnaire and interviews, and appears to be considered a more "neutral" accent than the British, as emphasised by both Dina, Anna and Christopher in the interviews. Dina and Christopher point out that they would like to put on a British accent, but that this accent seems somewhat artificial when used by them. Similarly, Berit aims at a British accent, but admits that she talks with a more American-influenced accent when she does not pay attention, as it is "all around us." These findings

suggest that media and entertainment influence L2 accent choice, as Norwegians are greatly exposed to the American accent through its dominant presence in films, television series and music industry; a notion confirmed by the informants of the questionnaire when answering that media has strongly influenced their English (see Figure 2).

The desire to sound native-like when speaking English is further strengthened as the interviewees agree that it is an ambition to sound like a native speaker, illustrated by Anna's reply: "[...] the more you can fake it, the better." The five teacher-training students describe it as a huge compliment to be mistaken for a native, an event Berit beautifully refers to as "the proudest moment of my life." In contrast, Erik reflects on how he is rather embarrassed of his lack of a "proper accent" and emphasises that he feels quite inadequate when compared to a native speaker: "It's not a great feeling, this being what I'm good at, and in some ways, I'm not really that good at it." For the five teacher training students, to be mistaken for a native seems to be the most valued approval of a successful imitation process. This trend confirms claims made by Andreasson in 1994: "In the Expanding Circle [...] the ideal goal is to imitate the native speaker of the standard language as closely as possible" (402). The strong preference for native-like accents does not, however, concur with the claims of ELF, as Seidellhofer (2010) states that ELF-speakers become agents of the English language, at the same time as the language "ceases to be perceived as the property of the ancestral speaker" (362). In contrast, results from this study indicate a view on English as *the language of others*; the English language belongs to the idealised native speaker.

Closely related to the desire to sound native-like, informants in both the questionnaire and interviews reveal a strong desire to conceal traces of their L1. The five interviewees confirm the trend from the questionnaire, where a majority rejects the importance of maintaining a Norwegian accent in their English. To the interviewees, being identified as Norwegian is perceived as slightly embarrassing and interpreted as pointing out their unsuccessful attempt to pass for a native speaker. This trend supports Jenkins' (2006b) reflections concerning ELF-speakers, as she admits that we "cannot assume the existence of a straightforward desire to express membership of an international (ELF) community or an L1 identity in their L2 English" (87). Rather, findings in this thesis appear to be pointing in the opposite direction; traces of the L1 should be swept under the rug and preferably ignored if noticed.

The strong desire to sound native-like among participants in this study, partly dismisses Jenkins' predictions of a move away from the native ideal among teachers in the expanding circle (e.g. 2000, 2006, 2009a). Rather, the results correspond with studies by Grau (2008), where prospective English teachers in Germany communicated a clear preference for British and American pronunciation. According to Grau (ibid), the preference for native varieties were found to be very much related to prestige, a finding supported by Rindal (2012) in her research on L2 pronunciation

among Norwegian learners of English. The notion of prestige is confirmed in this study, as illustrated by Berit's description of the British English accent she aims at as *intelligent, prestigious, in control, sophisticated* and *really amusing*. Furthermore, a majority of the questionnaire's participants lists British and American as their favourite accents. However, whereas the British accent gained the most favourable associations, participants in the questionnaire associated the American accent with unflattering connotations like *rude, sloppy* and *dominant*. This trend demonstrates that many L2 speakers aim at the accent that is likely to be most familiar to them through media and entertainment, despite possible preferences for other L2 accents.

### 6.1.2 "I kind of turn into a different person when I talk"<sup>14</sup> - L2 accent choice

Elaborating on their choice of English accent, the five interviewees demonstrate an extensive L2 competence as they appear to make conscious accent choices adapted to various contexts and audiences. The future teachers all confirm that they occasionally put on a Norwegian-influenced English to create a humorous effect, and to Berit, Norwegian-influenced English is also applied when speaking with other NNS. At the same time, the interviewees report a broad register of available L2 accents, as illustrated by Christopher who claims that he sometimes tries to speak "as British as possible" even though he usually aims at an American accent. Similarly, Berit points towards a compelling register of L2 accents, as she explains how she usually aims at a British accent when she is to "speak English" but may speak with an American accent when she does not pay attention, reflecting an inconsistency between her conscious and subconscious accent choices.

The notion of *imitating* the native speaker is present in results from both the questionnaire and the interviews, as participants communicate their preference of sounding native-like with comments like "fake it till you make it" and "the more you can fake it the better". Furthermore, participants seem to be highly aware of their own accent choices, as four of the five interviewees emphasise that they put on a role at the same time as they put on an accent. Christopher says that he turns into a different person when he speaks English: "I somehow feel like I don't recognise myself." For Berit, the character she becomes as she puts on the British accent collides with her role as a teacher: "I have to do quite a lot of acting to pull off the real British accent. That person doesn't match me as a teacher." Thus, L2 accent choice seem to be founded in roles and qualities that are associated with the different accents, and may as such reflect underlying attitudes towards these accents. For instance, some of the interviewees appear to associate a native-like accent with their role as teachers, and the Norwegian-influenced accent with casual amusement or communication with other non-native speakers.

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<sup>14</sup> Christopher, see section 5.2.1.

The reported ability to *put on an accent*, mentioned by several of the interviewees, illustrates a complex L2 identity among proficient language users; the participants appear to be able to juggle between different L2 accents and do not necessarily have a fixed L2 accent as an innate part of their identity. Rather, the five teacher training students seem to make conscious L2 accent choices from their linguistic repertoire, thinking *I'll talk English now, let's go for the American accent this time*. Even though this thesis does not consider actual linguistic performance, it is clear that the interviewees perceive themselves as capable of *putting on* different accents of their L2.

## 6.2 Attitudes towards accents used by teachers and learners of English in Norway

### 6.2.1 “As long as you are good enough<sup>15</sup>” -The non-native teacher

Echoing their own accent aims, a majority of the participants in the questionnaire consider British or American to be the most suitable accents to use for English teachers in Norwegian classrooms. At the same time, the included comments reveal conflicting attitudes, as several participants point out that communication and understanding should be the centre of attention. This ambivalence is further strengthened in the interviews, where all five participants initially state that they would favour a standard-variety. The preference for a standard accent is especially evident in Christopher's reply, as he says that teachers should strive to sound more native-like in order to be an *inspiration* for their students and make the subject *more fun*. In contrast, both Dina and Berit remember former teachers striving to sound British, and point out that they would like to encourage a greater awareness of different accents in the classroom and promote a focus on understanding between teacher and pupil. However, both Dina and Berit demonstrate ambivalent attitudes as they conclude by stating that native-like accents of English should be preferred in the classroom.

Interestingly, accent attitudes among the five interviewees seem to be reflected in their views on former English teachers. The five participants all mention that former English teachers have influenced their English; for better or worse. Christopher describes his teacher at upper secondary school as inspirational, emphasising that this teacher “talked English very well,” in contrast to earlier teachers who “weren't real English teachers, sort of.” The influence of this experience is reflected later in Christopher's interview, where he points out that teachers should aim at a native variety in order to be an inspiration for their learners. Berit, who aims at a British accent, remembers her former English teacher considering British English as “the only accent that really mattered”, even though she spoke with a distinct Norwegian-influenced English herself. Similarly, Anna, who aims at an American accent, does not have fond memories of former English teachers, who spoke Norwegian-influenced English: “To me, Norwegian English is associated with bad

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<sup>15</sup> Berit, see section 5.2.2.

vocabulary and in that setting also with bad teachers.”

Even though the interviewees indicate that an English teacher should aim at a standard variety, the five prospective teachers are confident that they have the competence needed to become good English teachers in Norwegian schools. They essentially dismiss the notion of native teachers being better suited to teach English, but emphasise that learners would benefit from being exposed to native speaker input. Furthermore, both Erik and Berit feel that people might expect teachers to “be perfect”; referring to a high level of proficiency reflected through a flawless, native-like accent. However, Berit emphasises that these expectations become irrelevant as the teacher enters a classroom, where the most important thing is for teachers to communicate with their students and be “good enough.” These views correlate with Medyges’ (1994) emphasis on the advantages of non-native teachers, pointing out that they can be great models for language learning, have an excellent knowledge of language learning strategies and the opportunity to use the L1 they have in common with their pupils.

The ambivalent relationship between the preference for standard accents as model for teaching on the one hand, and the wish to encourage international varieties on the other, is evident in several reflections of the five interviewees. Berit emphasises that communication should be encouraged in the classroom, but states that she would not like to teach ELF-accented as students should have a standard to aim at: “Either American or British. It would be great if lingua franca accents were more accepted, but I won’t teach them.” Based on the dominant preference indicated in the questionnaire and interviews for learners and teachers to use standard varieties, the participants appear to agree that they would like to teach about international varieties, but not encourage the *use* of international varieties in the classroom. These findings partially correlate with the reported ambivalence and contradictions found in accent attitudes of non-native teachers in Jenkins (2006b), where teachers initially claimed that they would like to teach ELF-accented, but simultaneously expressed persistent standard-language ideologies. These findings suggest that Jenkins’ initial prediction of a move away from the focus on native varieties in the expanding circle was rather premature; the move away from the native speaker ideal may very well make sense, but it appears to be a move prospective teachers in this study are reluctant to make.

### **6.2.2 “They are, after all, students<sup>16</sup>”- Attitudes towards accents used by learners of English**

Results from the questionnaire indicate torn attitudes towards accents used by learners; future teachers would like to encourage native accents among their learners, but also express a desire to focus on communication and understanding rather than native-like accents. Some participants point

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<sup>16</sup> Anna, see section 5.2.2.

out that students should be encouraged to “just talk”, while others emphasise that learners should try to “pronounce it, make use of it, in a way close to the native speaker of that language.” This division is confirmed in the interviews, where the five participants express a preference for promoting native varieties among future pupils, but additionally specify that learners should be encouraged to use an accent that allows them to communicate and express themselves. This ambivalence is perfectly illustrated by Dina’s reply, initially admitting that “I favour aiming at a native variety” before rapidly adding that “as long as you can make yourself understood [...] You don’t need to sound like a native speaker to make yourself understood.” As such, informants in this study confirm findings by Grau (2008), where future teachers emphasised that the objective of teaching should be communication and mutual intelligibility, but objected to foreign accents of English when exposed to them. However, Grau (ibid) points towards an openness for international varieties among future teachers that might predict a shift of focus in English language teaching. This observation mirrors findings from this thesis, as informants attentively emphasise understanding and communication and express a careful degree of acceptance of the use of Norwegian-influenced English among learners.

The notion of encouraging communication and understanding among learners appears to be closely intertwined with accepting the use of Norwegian-influenced English in the classroom. As indicated by results from the questionnaire, participants were more willing to accept Norwegian-influenced English among learners than among teachers. In the interviews, Norwegian English was generally referred to as an acceptable accent to use by learners, indicating that they are somewhere in the process of language learning, as stated by Anna: “They are, after all, students.” However, the participants seem to agree that pupils should be encouraged to move away from Norwegian-accented English with time, as clearly stated by Christopher: “But they also have to recognise that Norwegian accents have nothing to do in their English.” The interviewees’ attitudes towards accents used by learners of English indicate a view on Norwegian-influenced English as an *imperfect* accent, associated with learners at a lower level of proficiency. This notion may explain why the participants express a great desire to aim at near-nativeness themselves, removing themselves from the accent associated with an unfinished learning process.

### **6.3 Attitudes towards international varieties of English**

#### **6.3.1 “It sounds a bit like a parody, right?”<sup>17</sup>- Attitudes towards Norwegian-influenced English**

Surprisingly, more than 6% of the participants in the questionnaire claim that they aim at

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<sup>17</sup> Christopher, see section 5.2.2.



Norwegian-accented English themselves, 14% would prefer teachers and/or pupils to aim at this accent and 17% would encourage future pupils to aim at Norwegian-influenced English. These results point towards a careful acceptance of the variety, as participants are rather reluctant to aim at Norwegian-influenced English themselves but show an interest in encouraging future speakers of English to aim at this accent.

Interestingly, the questionnaire revealed a higher degree of acceptance towards Norwegian-influenced English than what was communicated in the interviews. This might be an expected outcome, as the questionnaire did not offer the informants the same opportunity to elaborate and reflect on their preferences as the interviewees were given. However, even though Norwegian-influenced English is described with positive connotations like *funny*, *underrated* and *charming* in the questionnaire, the accent is also referred to as both *awkward* and *embarrassing*. Furthermore, a majority of the participants agree that they would mind if people recognise them as Norwegian when they speak English. This trend is strengthened in the interviews, where the five teacher-training students admit that being identified as Norwegian can be rather embarrassing. The participants would interpret the identification of their L1 as pointing out their failed mission to pass for native, as demonstrated by Anna's thought reaction if identified as Norwegian: "But I'm trying! Why doesn't it work?"

The reluctance towards being identified with a Norwegian-influenced accent might be strongly connected to the five teacher training students' negative associations with the accent. To Berit, Norwegian-influenced English sounds *less intelligent*, *less serious* and *like a parody*. To Anna, the accent has a *sign of equation with "does not know the language very well"*. At the same time, both Anna and Dina emphasise that the dismay associated with being identified with the Norwegian-influenced accent has more to do with the desire to excel at things they have worked at, rather than being an expression of dislike towards Norwegian-influenced English. The ambivalent attitudes towards the foreign-accented English are perfectly illustrated by Anna's concise reply when asked if it would be fine to be identified as non-native: "Yes, but I hope they don't." The interviewees seem to agree with Maley's description of foreign-accented English as "the ugly duckling" (2010: 35). Norwegian-influenced English is an ugly duckling that might be good enough for some speakers; prospective English teachers, however, would rather be mistaken for native speakers.

### **6.3.2 Native speaker ownership**

The results from the questionnaire indicate a trend of negative associations towards international varieties of English, illustrated by Chinese English being described as *poor* and *difficult to*

*understand*, and French English as *horrible* and *very bad*. However, several of the interviewees seem to agree that international varieties should be accepted by both native and non-native speakers of English, as illustrated by Dina's reference to the "growing trend" of viewing communication as the goal of English language use. In this study, prospective teachers' attitudes demonstrate a tension between the focus on communication and understanding on the one hand, and the idealisation of the native speaker on the other. The growing acceptance of international varieties of English is reflected in the participants' attitudes towards the international variety they are most familiar with; Norwegian-influenced English. This accent is not desired for themselves, but is acceptable among future pupils as long as it does not hinder the goal of English language use: communication.

Pointing towards communication and understanding as the goal of English language use, prospective teachers simultaneously express a view on communication between non-native speakers as rather chaotic, and a preference for taking the safest route towards understanding, founded on standard varieties. The notion of native speaker ownership clearly persists in attitudes of prospective English teachers in Norway, dismissing claims of ELF that predicts a shift among expanding circle speakers towards viewing English language as rightfully their own: "The Latin name symbolically removes the ownership of English from the Anglos both to no one and, in effect, to everyone" (Jenkins 2000:11). Rather, representatives of the expanding circle in this study do not demonstrate a strong desire to put the native speaker in the corner, as perfectly illustrated by Christopher's reflections on international varieties of English: "Fair enough that ELF is a thing and all that, but English is one of the languages in the world too, it has deep roots and I think one should honour that." As such, the informants seem partially to support Maley (2010) in his critique of the ELF-claims, as he points out that a shift in attitudes is improbable as long as non-native teachers and learners look towards the native speaker as an ideal.

As informants from both the questionnaire and interviews confirm that they are familiar with concepts of Global English and ELF, it is interesting to consider whether teacher education has made future teachers aware of the many uses of English, as requested by Rindal (2012). Both Dina and Berit state that teacher studies have influenced their attitudes towards uses of English, and Berit recognises a drastic change as she compares her present attitudes towards English accents with the attitudes she had when she started teaching training: "Norwegian English was like, before, it was like, only for people who hadn't worked hard enough. I was terribly arrogant really. It has changed." This utterance demonstrates a conscious awareness of flexible language attitudes, and illustrates the importance of making future teachers consider the way they think about English varieties, as emphasised by Lopriore (2010), Crystal (2003) and Rindal (2012).

Results from this thesis clearly indicate a careful shift in attitudes, as teachers of tomorrow seem to express a desire to *think* differently about accents and uses of English but *do* the same –

that is, emphasise understanding and communication in the classroom while encouraging a standard accent. This careful shift is clearly stated by Berit: “I’m thinking that attitudes towards lingua franca accents should change, but the goal should be the same; British or American.”

## 7. Conclusions

An investigation of attitudes towards L2 accents among prospective teachers demonstrates both ambivalence and contradictions. At the heart of this ambivalence lies the tension between understanding and communication on the one hand, and the desire to sound native and hide the traces of the L1 on the other. This tension becomes evident as the informants emphasise that L2 speakers do not need a perfect accent to communicate, but simultaneously express a strong preference for native-like accents; not only for themselves, but also among teachers and learners in Norwegian classrooms. The ambivalence pointed out in this thesis confirms findings from other studies on accent attitudes among teachers and learners in Europe (e.g. Grau 2008; Lopriore 2010; Jenkins 2000), and are valuable indicators of attitudes towards English among non-native speakers in the expanding circle.

Inspired by Jenkins’ (e.g.2009a) predictions of a shift away from the native speaker ideal, results from this thesis indicate that prospective English teachers in Norway still view English as *the language of others*; the participants desire to imitate the native speaker as closely as possible and hide the traces of their L1. However, the participants demonstrate a careful shift in focus, illustrated by the attentive emphasis prospective teachers put on understanding and communication as the goal of language use. Teachers of tomorrow seem to express a desire to *think* differently about accents and uses of English but *do* the same – that is, they emphasise understanding and communication in the classroom while encouraging a standard accent. Jenkins’ predicted move away from the native speaker ideal may very well make sense, but it appears to be a move prospective teachers in this study are reluctant to make.

Teacher-training students are in a unique position between learners and teachers, and their views on how English should be spoken by themselves and future pupils are significant indicators of the accent attitudes promoted among L2 speakers of tomorrow. However, attitudes are not constant, as demonstrated by interviewees pointing out that their attitudes towards different varieties of English have changed during their time as teacher-training students. Thus, it is important that teacher educations challenge future students to explore their own language attitudes and consider how they will prepare pupils for the diversity of English varieties and uses they will meet outside the classroom.

While investigating accent attitudes among prospective teachers, the researcher has come

across many aspects that could not be pursued in all its complexity in this thesis. For instance, it would have been interesting to carry out the same research with both experienced teachers and pupils as participants, and compare their attitudes towards Norwegian-influenced English in particular, offering a broader insight into L2 accent attitudes. It would be particularly interesting to focus on the reported trend of putting on Norwegian-influenced English in certain contexts to create humorous effect. In addition, there are many unexplored opportunities in research on attitudes towards Norwegian-influenced English in the Norwegian society more generally. Finally, further research on the L2 accent choice should be encouraged, focusing especially on the fascinating notion of “putting on an accent”, as mentioned by several of the interviewees when discussing their L2 accent choice.

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# Appendix I

## Questionnaire

### Part I: Personal information

Male  Female

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Country of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Mother tongue (s) \_\_\_\_\_

Program of study \_\_\_\_\_

Year of study \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever lived in an English-speaking country? If yes, where and for how long? \_\_\_\_\_

Is English your MA subject? Yes  No

What would you say have influenced your English the most? You can choose more than one option.

Former English teachers  Travel  Media

Family/ friends  Other \_\_\_\_\_

### Part II:

1) In the spaces below, please write a word or phrase that you associate with the following English accents. You can refer to **any** aspect of the accent (i.e. what it sounds like, politeness, understandability, beauty etc.)

1) American English \_\_\_\_\_

2) Indian English \_\_\_\_\_

3) Australian English \_\_\_\_\_

4) French English \_\_\_\_\_

5) Swedish English \_\_\_\_\_

6) Chinese English \_\_\_\_\_

7) British English \_\_\_\_\_

8) Norwegian English \_\_\_\_\_

2) Please list the **three** English accents that you like the most.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

3) Which accent are you aiming at when you speak English?

American English  British English  Norwegian English

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4) Are you satisfied with your English?

Very satisfied  Quite satisfied

Not very satisfied  Unsatisfied

5) Would you like to sound more “native-like” when you speak English (i.e. American, British etc.)?

Yes  No

6) In your opinion, which accent should be favoured when teaching English in Norwegian schools?

American English  British English  Norwegian English

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

7) To what extent do you think it is important to maintain your Norwegian accent in your English?

Very important  Slightly important  Not important

8) Would you mind if people were to recognise the Norwegian origin through your English?

Yes very much  Slightly  Not at all

9) What kind of English accent would you encourage your future pupils to aim at?

American English  British English  Norwegian English

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10) To what extent do you think a native speaker of English would make a better English teacher in Norwegian schools than a Norwegian English teacher?

Much better  Somewhat better  Not at all

Why/ why not? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

11) As a university student, have you ever studied topics such as English as a Lingua Franca, Global English or World Englishes?

Yes  No  Never heard of these concepts

**Comments** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# Appendix II

## Interview Guide

### 1. Personal background:

- a) Year of study
- b) Why did you choose English as your MA subject?
- c) What would you say have influenced the English accent you aim at speaking the most?

### 2. Attitudes towards own English accent:

- a) Which accent are you aiming at when you speak English?
- b) Why do you aim at this accent?
- d) Are you satisfied with your oral English?
- e) Would you like to sound more native-like when you speak English?
- f) Do you try to communicate a Norwegian identity through your English?
- g) Would you mind if people were to recognise a Norwegian origin through your English?
- h) How would you react to the following statements:
  - *I can hear the Norwegian accent in your English!*
  - *You sound (insert desired English accent)*

### 3. Teaching English

- a) What do you think should be the preferred accent when teaching English in Norwegian schools?
- b) What accent will you encourage your future pupils to aim at?
- c) Do you think a native speaker of English would make a better English teacher than a Norwegian English teacher?
- d) Do you think it is possible to maintain features of the L1 when speaking English and still be intelligible to other speakers of English?

### 4. English as an international language

- a) Have you studied any topics of ELF, Global English or World Englishes during your teacher training?
- b) Do you perceive EIL accents (i.e. English as spoken by Norwegian speakers) to be accepted by most people?
- c) Would it help your confidence as an English teacher if EIL accents were more acknowledged?

## **Appendix III**

### **Consent Form for Participation in MA Project**

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Maiken Risan, designed to form the basis for an MA thesis in English at NTNU (Norwegian University of Science and Technology). I understand and consent to the following points:

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation, and that I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time.
2. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the session.
3. Participation in the project involves an individual interview. Notes may be written during the session and an audio recording of the interviews will be made. If I do not wish to be taped, I will not be able to participate in the study. The recording will be deleted after it has been transcribed, and excerpts may be included in the thesis.
4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in the thesis, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.
5. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
6. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

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Signature

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Date

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Signature of the Researcher