

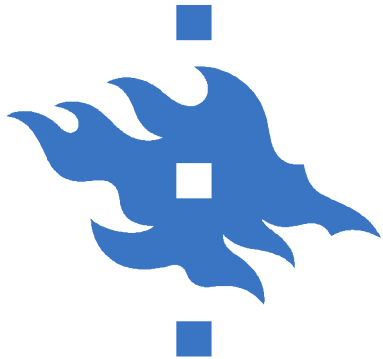
Bad English?

Ray Carey, ELFA project

(English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings)

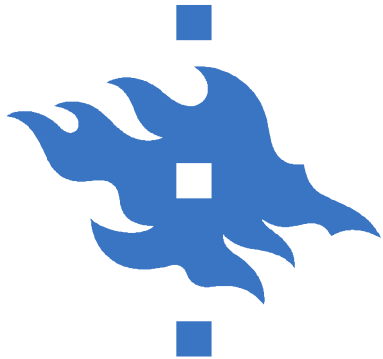
University of Helsinki

21.5.2013 • kv-asioiden kevätpäivät



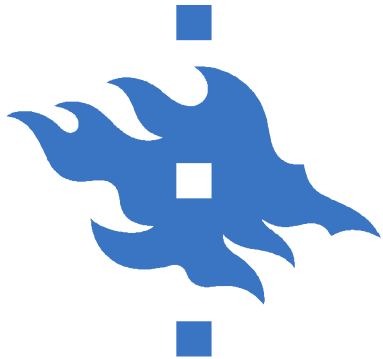
Global English: myth & reality

- English in the world today
 - Whose English?
- ELFA project (English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings)
 - What does English look like in Finland?
- Policies in practice
 - How to best support staff and students?



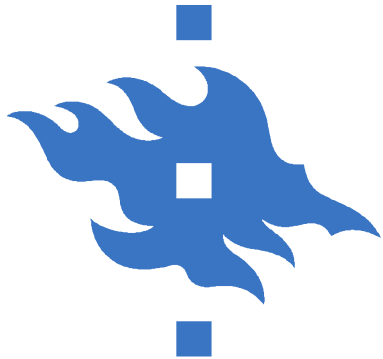
Whose English is it?

- Centers (centres?) of power
 - US & UK → gatekeepers of academic publishing
- From colonies to new English varieties
 - Singapore, Philippines, Hong Kong, India, South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana → official status
- Globalization & the need for a lingua franca
 - ELF = English as a lingua franca
 - contact language between speakers who don't share a first language (non-native/non-native)



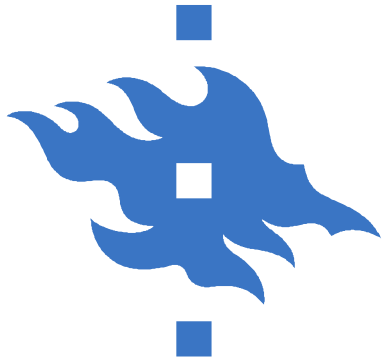
Traditional approaches, new realities

- Teaching and learning English
 - Imitation of the “target culture”
 - Accent, idiom & convention
 - Native English = “real English”
- English learners vs. English *users*
 - A hopeless quest for “native-like” proficiency?
 - ELF speakers as language users *in their own right*
 - Using ELF for real-world tasks and needs



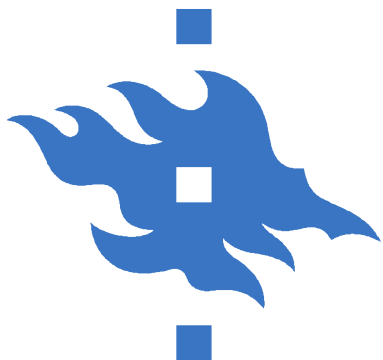
Ownership, purity & prejudice

- Does English have an “owner”?
 - Native speakers are now the minority (but retain their claims to ownership)
 - Who owns English in Finland?
 - Challenging the discourse of “purity” & “protection”
- Tankero englanti: a good reason to keep quiet
 - We can’t all be Alexander Stubb (just ask Jyrki)
 - Are Finns most critical of each other’s English?



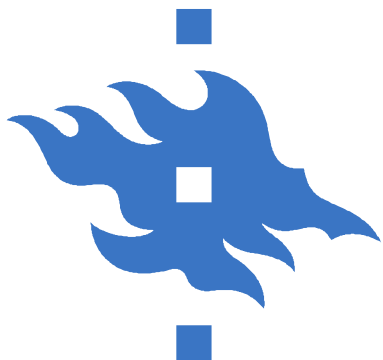
ELF as a research paradigm

- English as a lingua franca is NOT:
 - “Bad English” (or “butchered”, “hashed-up”, “mangled”, “ghastly”, “tankero englantti”)
 - “Globish” (a restricted set of 1500 words)
 - Another language (English *used* as a lingua franca)
- Separating good English from native English
 - Clarity vs. color
 - What do ELF users actually do? Does it work?



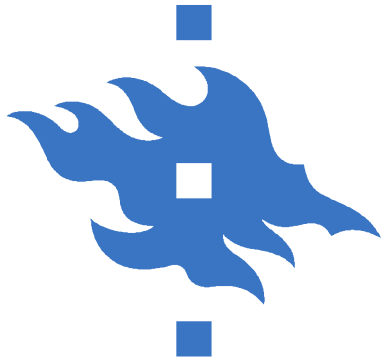
ELFA project: ELF in academia

- ELFA corpus (www.helsinki.fi/elfa/elfacorporus)
 - 1 million words of transcribed academic talk (130 hours) recorded in Helsinki & Tampere
 - Lectures, Masters/PhD seminars, conference presentations and discussions, doctoral defences
 - 51 different first languages represented
- Descriptive research
 - Not “promoting English”
 - Authentic linguistic data + perspectives of ELF users



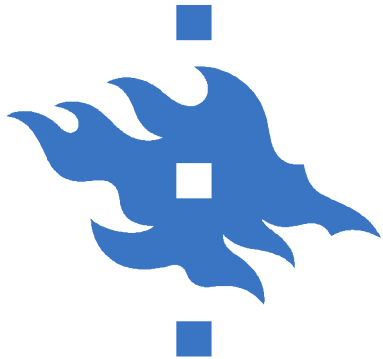
What's so different about ELF?

- Word-level variation
 - use of articles (*a, an, the*)
 - verb marking (*he teach in our department*)
 - some simplification of vocabulary
- Conventional phrases (how words go together)
 - *we can discuss about different topics*
 - *so to speak / so to say*
 - *(in/from/on/to) my (view/sense/point of view)*



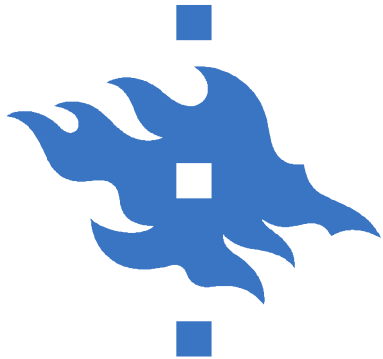
Creativity & color

- Idiomatic language
 - *älä nuolaise ennen kuin tipahtaa*
 - *let's not wake up any dogs*
 - *fil rouge* → *punainen lanka* → *red thread*
- Producing new words from familiar parts
 - *increasement, researches, standardisate, unuseful*
- Multilingual resources



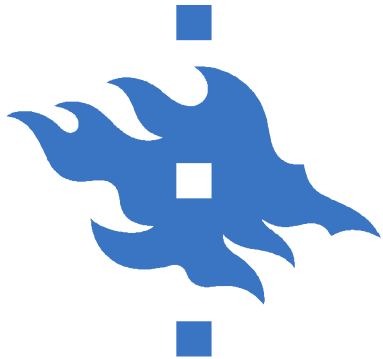
Collaboration & cooperation

- Working to prevent misunderstanding
 - confirmation checks / feedback from listeners
 - “finishing each others’ sentences”
- Repetition and rephrasing
 - enhancing clarity & explicitness
 - managing the flow of information
 - Suviniitty 2012: connection between interactive features and accessibility of lectures in ELF



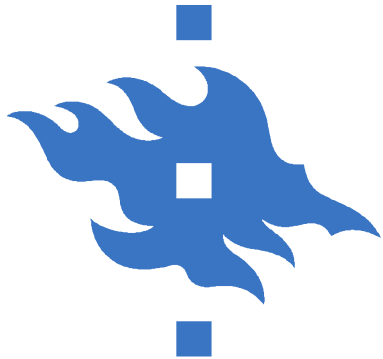
Adapting to the situation

- Each ELF encounter a new mixture
 - of first languages (and accents)
 - of cultural expectations
- All you can know for certain is yourself!
- Can English native speakers adapt?
 - they can if they want to!
 - both extremes can be found in ELFA data



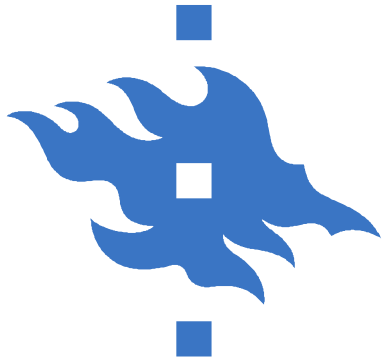
Implications for policymakers

- ELF research has focused on spoken interaction
 - Misunderstandings are infrequent
 - ELF users (generally) manage well in interaction
- Formal academic writing
 - Requires socialization (even for native speakers)
 - A barrier for scientific publication
 - US/UK are minorities with all the power
 - Proofreading/editing costs money (whose money?)



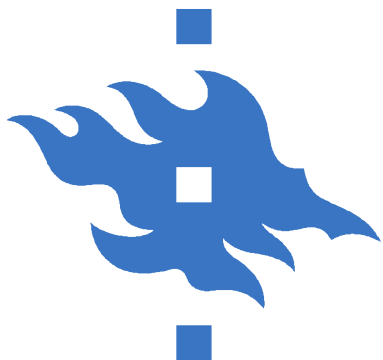
Language support

- University of Copenhagen (<http://cip.ku.dk/english/>)
 - Centralized, performance-based language certification
 - Evaluation criteria developed in-house
 - Follow-up, customized language training
 - Intensive academic writing for foreign students
- Foreign staff/students need Finnish!
 - Relevant Finnish instruction
 - Integration into the broader society



Research openings

- Netta Hirvensalo: university language policy
 - How are policies realized “on the ground”?
 - Experiences of teachers, students & researchers
 - Dialogue between policy makers & ELF users
- What about *written* ELF?
 - Currently collecting a new corpus of written academic ELF (WrELFA)
 - preliminary examiners’ statements, research blogs



www.helsinki.fi/elfa elfaproject.wordpress.com

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