

Adjusting to Non-Native Speaker Levels of English: Attitudes of Native Speakers of English

Master Thesis Intercultural Communication

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Introduction

Currently, English is the world's most influential lingua franca. The use of English has risen dramatically over the last couple of decades, which can be ascribed to internationalisation, the rise of the Internet and the use of English in various media globally. One area where the use of the English language has experienced an exponential increase is in the field of business. Charles states that over 90% of English speakers are non-native speakers of English (NNSEs) and that more business is done between NNSEs than between native speakers of English (NSEs), which means that NSEs are becoming outnumbered by NNSEs (263).

The rise of English used in international business has led to the introduction of a new concept: business English as a lingua franca, also known as BELF. Business English as a lingua franca is the framework in which NNSEs do business with one another, while using English as a lingua franca to communicate. BELF is not just restricted to NNSEs, as NSEs often work in international contexts as well. Therefore, NSEs are also confronted with BELF and thus with different forms of non-native English. Research shows that NNSEs often have more trouble communicating with NSEs than with other NNSEs in business contexts (Kankaanranta et al.; Charles) and that they find it easier to talk to other NNSEs. This can be ascribed to the fact that NNSEs use a simpler form of English compared to NSEs and to the fact that NSEs possess superior linguistic competence in English and are therefore much quicker in thinking and speaking in English than NNSEs. Communication problems should be avoided as much as possible given the fact that they have a detrimental effect on business. According to Charles and Marschan-Piekkari, one way to improve communication between NSEs and NNSEs is to involve NSEs in language training, in which they are taught how they can adjust their language use to NNSEs.

The proposed training for NSEs is relevant considering that NNSEs currently outnumber NSEs in the business context and that NNSEs at times seem to have trouble understanding NSEs. NNSEs already do their part by learning English, which makes it the responsibility of NSEs to start

accommodating to NNSEs as well. Moreover, introducing such a training model for NSEs could improve the internal and external communication of an organisation. However, before the process of designing such a training model can start, the issue of whether NSEs would be willing to participate in such a training or not should be looked into. After all, they are the native speakers of the English language and therefore they could be of the opinion that it is the responsibility of NNSEs to learn English sufficiently.

The current research aims to find out more about the attitudes of NSEs towards training models, in which they would be taught how to adjust their language use to NNSEs. Moreover, the current research aims to elicit more information from NSEs that could help design training models for NNSEs. Eight NNSEs who work and live in the Netherlands were interviewed. They were asked questions about topics such as their perceived accommodation to NNSEs, communication (problems) with NNSEs, their feelings of ownership of the English language and their willingness to participate in the proposed training model. More information about the method of research and the participants can be found in chapter 2.

Before an analysis of the interviews could be made, sufficient knowledge about research that has been done so far on the subject had to be required. This information will be presented in chapter 1, where the concepts of English as a lingua franca and business English as a lingua franca will be explained and compared. Furthermore, chapter one will look at the issue of ownership of English and whether a language can actually have owners, and it will provide more information about the responsibility of NSEs and NNSEs in communication. The interviews will be discussed in chapter 3 and will be presented in separate topics. Chapter 4 will provide an analysis, where the discussion of the results of the interviews will be combined with the literature from chapter 1.

Chapter 5 will provide the conclusion and limitations of the current research, as well as recommendations for further research. It appears that the NSEs that were interviewed generally have a positive attitude towards participating in a training program, in which they would learn how to adjust their language use to NNSEs. Furthermore, the participants provided useful information

about what kind of elements they think the proposed training should contain. They stated that they already accommodate to NNSEs, and that the proposed training should therefore teach about topics in detail, for it to become relevant for the participants to participate in one. They also suggested training should be given in the form of workshops, in which both NSEs and NNSEs participate so that they can learn from each other.

Chapter 1: Overview of the Literature

This chapter will discuss the role of the English language as a lingua franca and how it has come to have such an influence on international business. Chapter 1 will also introduce the concept of business English as a lingua franca and present a focus on the role of the native speaker in international business communication in English. The issue of ownership of the English language will be taken into consideration in this chapter, as well as the use of English in the Dutch business context.

1.1 English as a Lingua Franca

English is one of the most influential languages that are spoken in the world today. English is currently used in international media, international business and international education and can therefore be considered a global language. According to Michael Halliday, a global language is “a tongue which has moved beyond his nation, to become ‘international’; it is taken over, as second tongue, by speakers of other languages, who retain some features of their national forms of expression” (408) . He also states that if a language has spread all over the world, it can be called a global language. English would fit this definition, as people all over the world are speaking and learning English. David Crystal argues that English is the global language, because of geographical-historical and socio-cultural factors (29).

The expansion of the British empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the start of the global diffusion of the English language, which has ultimately led to a number of 2.236 million people globally that are exposed to English regularly (Crystal 67). Crystal further comments on this phenomenon by saying that “the present-day world status of English is primarily the 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 of the twentieth century” (59). According to him, English is still influential to this day because of the influence the United States of America has world-wide.

Apart from geographical diffusion, other factors have contributed to making English a global language. In the nineteenth century, the English language was the key towards gaining knowledge. During the Industrial Revolution many innovations were created by the British, such as the harnessing of coal and the emergence of new means of transportation (Crystal 80). Soon, America began to create innovations as well and by the end of the nineteenth century it had replaced Britain as the world’s fastest growing economy (Crystal 81). In this period, the English language became more influential and started to spread fast. New means of transportation and the invention of the telegraph and the telephone allowed people to communicate faster and information to travel faster, which allowed the English language to spread faster as well. In the twentieth century, English continued its rise by becoming influential in the printing press, advertising, broadcasting, cinema, popular music and international travel (Crystal 90-120). The introduction of the Internet in 1999 strengthened the position and diffusion of English even further, as the main language used on the Internet is English.

Because of these events in history, English acquired the status that it has today: that of a global lingua franca. Currently, English also plays an important role in global education. To be able to access knowledge in areas such as business, technology and education, and to be able to communicate with people globally, people have to learn English. The extensive growth of foreign language learners of English has ensured that there are currently more second-language speakers of English than first-language speakers, and even more people who speak English as a foreign language¹. In his article “Standards, Codification and Sociolinguistic Realism: The English Language in the Outer Circle,” Braj Kachru presents a model in which different varieties of English can be

¹ People who speak English as a foreign language are people who have (some) command of the English language, but who do not use it often.

categorised in three circles; the Inner Circle (native speakers), the Outer Circle (second language speakers) and the Expanding Circle (foreign language speakers) (See Figure 3). The number of people represented in all of the circles combined, add to a total of two billion people who use English globally. Figure 1 shows that the Expanding Circle, which contains people who use English as a foreign language, is almost three times the size of the Inner Circle. This observation is congruent with Crystal, who states that the ratio of native to non-native speakers of English is about 1:3. This shows that English is used by many people from different cultural backgrounds in bilingual and multilingual situations, “with various forms of pronunciation, vocabulary, syntax and discourse” (Kubota 48).

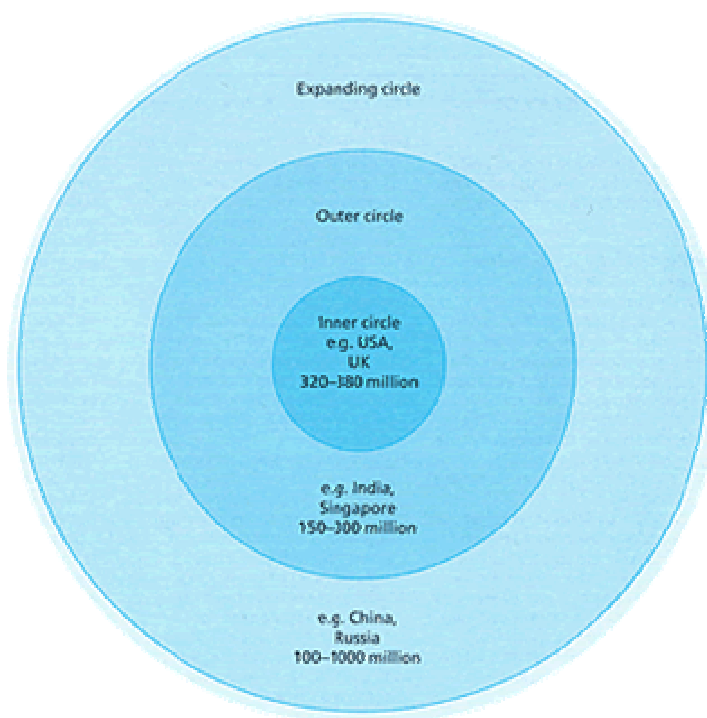


Figure 1: Circle model by Braj Kachru (1985)

Because English is widely spoken across the globe by people who are not native speakers of English, it is considered an important lingua franca. According to Jennifer Jenkins, a lingua franca is “a contact language used among people who do not share a first language, and is commonly understood to mean a second (or subsequent) language of its speakers” (*English as a Lingua Franca* 1). English as a lingua franca (ELF) differs from English as a second language (ESL) in that ELF is used

as a language of communication *between* national groups², whereas ESL is used as a language of communication *within* national groups (*English as a Lingua Franca* 4, italics added). Furthermore, ELF differs from English as a foreign language (EFL) in that ELF is used primarily used as a language of communication among NNSEs, whereas EFL is used as a language of communication between NSEs and NNSEs (*ibid.*, italics added).

1.2 Business English as a Lingua Franca

As in chapter 1.1, the number of people who speak English as a foreign language has risen extensively over the last few years. According to Charles, an accurate estimate would be that close to 90% of English speakers³ are non-native speakers. Furthermore, she goes on to say that “[a]rguably, more international business is actually done in English between NNSs than between NSs” (263). This shows how important English has become, especially in international business. One of the most important contributors to this rise in popularity of English in the business context is globalisation. Friedman divides globalisation into three stages: Globalisation 1.0 (1492-1800), Globalisation 2.0 (1800-2000) and Globalisation 3.0 (the current stage). He lists the following characteristics for each: “[W]hile the dynamic force in Globalization 1.0 was *countries* globalizing and the dynamic force in Globalization 2.0 was *companies* globalizing, the dynamic force in Globalization 3.0 – the thing that gives it its unique character – is the newfound power for *individuals* to collaborate and compete globally” (10). Friedman further mentions that software has made us all “next-door neighbors” and that Globalization 3.0 has made it possible for more people “to plug and play” and that “every colour of the human rainbow” can now take part (11).

However, globalisation cannot be achieved solely through technology; people, companies and countries have to be able to communicate with one another as well. Currently, English is a

² A national group signifies a set of individuals whose identity as such is distinctive in terms of nationality or national origins (for example, people that live in the Netherlands, or were born there, can be considered a national group).

³ Speakers include NSEs and NNSEs of English; a NNSE can be someone who speaks English nearly fluently, or someone who has only a limited command of English

language within which people can communicate globally with one another in international business. The fact that several multinational companies in Europe have replaced local languages with English as the official corporate language, is an example of how dominant English has become in international business (Kankaanranta and Planken 382). Jenkins also stresses the importance of English in international business by saying that “studies around the world . . . all confirm that English is an intrinsic part of communication in multinational settings and a fact of life for many business people” (*English as a Lingua Franca* 367). English as a lingua franca used in a business context has its own characteristics, compared to English used as a general lingua franca (ELF). To stress this, Leena Louhiala-Salminen, Kankaanranta and Charles introduce a specific term for the role of English in international business settings; Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF). They give the following definition of BELF:

BELF refers to English used as a “neutral” and shared communication code. BELF is neutral in the sense that none of the speakers can claim it as her/his mother tongue; it is shared in the sense that it is used for conducting business within the global business discourse community, whose members are BELF users and communicators in their own right – not “NNSs” or “learners”. (403–404)

Even though Louhiala-Salminen, Kankaanranta and Charles define BELF as a (culturally) “neutral” communication code, they do not mean to say that BELF is cultureless. In fact, they stress that “seeing lingua francas as cultureless ignores the fact that the speakers creating the lingua franca do have a cultural background and, in fact, a diversity of backgrounds” (404). They further mention that speakers of BELF do not only bring their “culture bound views” into communication, but also “discourse practices stemming from their respective mother tongues” (ibid.). Furthermore, according to Charles, the global business community can be referred to as “the ‘culture’ that has created BELF, and within which BELF evolves” (264). She adds that the culture of global business is diverse and dynamic, like all cultures are (ibid.). However, Charles does not mean to say that speakers of BELF have a common culture, but rather that the framework of BELF provides a common cultural ground

for its speakers because they all share (to a certain extent) the same values (e.g. “that of doing profitable business”) (264).

The approach to BELF differs from that to ELF in the view of what is important when it comes to communication. Charles lists the main differences in approaches in communication to ELF and BELF in Figure 2 below.

	ELF	BELF
Successful interactions are created through . . .	NS-like language use and linguistic competence.	Language use appropriate for the needs and requirements of the communicative event.
The speaker/writer aims to...	emulate NS discourse.	get the job done.
NNSs are seen as...	“sources of trouble”, “learners”	communicators in their own right.
The main source of communication problems is...	inadequate language skills	inadequate communication skills
“Culture” is...	the national cultures of NSs.	the diversity of the globalized business community.
The aim of linguistically oriented communication research is to...	increase understanding of deviations from NS-like English language and discourse, and reduce linguistic anomalies.	increase understanding of the different Englishes and discourses used to conduct global business, and encourage the development of situationally appropriate communication skills.

Figure 2: Summary of the Main Differences in Research Approaches Based on the ELF Concept and Those Based on BELF (Charles, *Language Matters in Global Communication* 266)

Figure 2 gives a short overview of the main differences in the approaches of ELF and BELF researchers. However, the overview remains superficial, because the differences between both approaches are not explained in detail. For example, Figure 2 shows that the main source of communication problems in ELF is having inadequate language skills; however, inadequate communications skills or cultural differences can also cause communication problems in ELF, but they are not mentioned in the overview. The same applies to the main source of communication problems in BELF: next to inadequate communication skills, communication problems in BELF can also be caused by inadequate language skills. Charles could have overgeneralised these traits to ensure a clear distinction between the two approaches.

Charles claims that the differences between the approaches of researchers of BELF and ELF lie in the different views toward communication and language. ELF researchers are more focused on language and view linguistic skills to be most important in communication, while BELF researchers are more focused on communication and view communication skills to be most important. From Figure 2, it is also apparent that the business aspect also differentiates BELF from ELF. Charles points out that "BELF differs from ELF in that its domain is solely business, and its frame of reference is provided by the globalized business community. The B of BELF is thus the sociopragmatic backdrop against which language ... is to be interpreted." (264)

In BELF, communicators seem to have a professional role (seller, employee, investor) and to get the job done they need different communication strategies compared to if they had been in a non-professional situation, where ELF applies. Kankaanranta and Louhiosa-Salminen distributed questionnaires among people whose work involves regular international interaction (NNSEs), to find out their opinions on the use of English versus other languages in international interactions, the significance of contextual factors and on language strategies and business communication strategies in BELF. They found that the main perception of their participants was that "the use of English in today's global business environment is 'simply work'" (207). Furthermore, they found that "for BELF communication business competence together with knowledge of business communication and

genre rules are clearly more important than, for example, grammatical and idiomatic correctness. Consequently, NS fluency is not a relevant criterion for success in international business work, and in addition, since most interactions take place between NNSs of English, it might not even be desirable (207).”

Because having near-native like linguistic competence is seemingly not of urgent importance in BELF, NNSEs in the business domain can have various levels of English competence, as not everyone will continue to improve his or her English to near-native levels if one can get by with mediocre proficiency or with having a foreign accent. Variety in English competence of NNSEs can also be caused by differences in schooling systems between countries; English might be obligatory in schools in one country, while not in another.

BELF is not just restricted to NNSEs, NSEs are also confronted with it. NSEs and NNSEs often have to cooperate in multinational companies, internally or externally. According to Rogerson-Revell, the framework “English as International Business (EIB)” can be used to refer to the use of English as a common language in business contexts where NSEs and NNSEs, which are the users of BELF, could both be present (105). In this framework, NSEs and NNSEs meet and communicate with each other (see Figure 3).

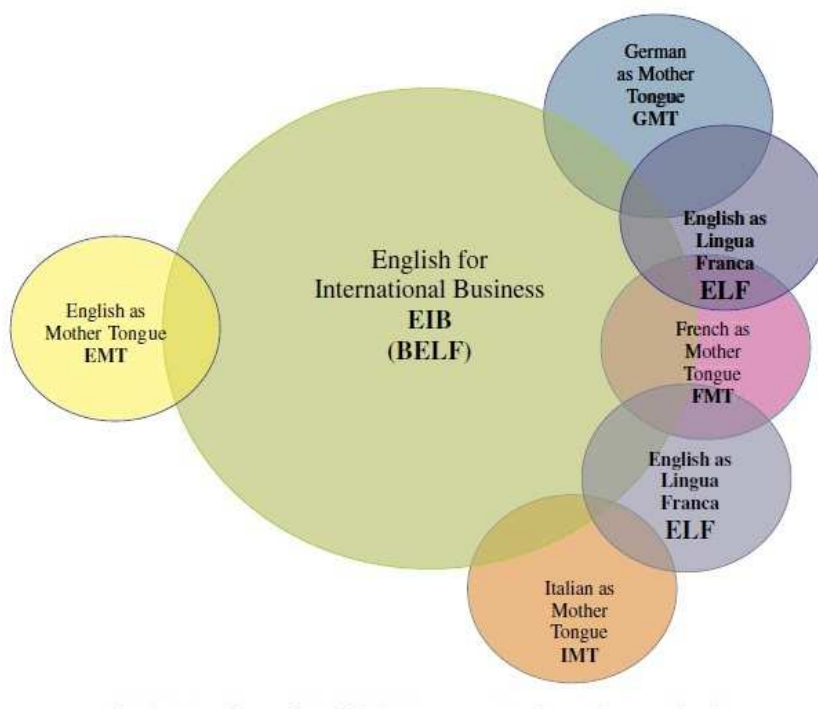


Figure 3: Functions of English in European Business Communication (Rogerson-Revell 107)

In addition, Rogerson states that the term ELF is used to “refer exclusively to the use of English between speakers whose mother tongue is not English”, which corresponds with the definition of ELF by Jenkins, given in chapter 1.1 (104-105).

Besides intercultural differences which can lead to communication problems between NSEs and NNSEs in international business, the various levels of English competence of NNSEs can lead to communication problems as well. Whereas much research has already been done into communication problems concerning NNSEs, the current research will focus on NSEs within the BELF framework: what they can or should do to make themselves better understood by NNSEs.

Research shows that NNSEs often experience more trouble understanding NSEs than other NNSEs in international business settings. One example can be found in research by Charles and Marschan-Piekkari within a Finland-based multinational corporation, KONE, where one NNSE expressed the following on communication problems he or she experienced with NSEs: “In terms of horizontal⁴ communication, the British are the worst. One issue that may contribute to this is language; they can speak their own native language. It is much more difficult to understand their English than that of other nationalities. When we all NNSs of English talk, it is much easier to understand. We have the same limited vocabulary” (17). Furthermore, in research by Rogerson-Revell, one participant comments negatively on his cooperation with NSEs as well: “Of course I think I should improve my English, especially in international business contexts, but I also think that native English speakers should make greater efforts (actually, most of them do none) in order to be properly understood by non-native English speakers” (117). In research by Kankaanranta and Planken, a similar result can be found:

⁴ Communication between people at the same level in an organization, community or peer group, usually as a means of coordinating efforts.

On the whole, our survey respondents [NNSEs] did not feel that they were more successful in their communication with NSs than NNSs. Neither did they feel that NS-like pronunciation was an essential element in effective communication. . . . When the interviewees were asked about their perceptions of communication with NSs versus NNSs, most of them seemed to have a clear conception about the differences between the two situations, characterizing oral interactions with NSs as unequal and asymmetrical and for this reason more difficult than with NNSs. (389)

There seem to be two main problems that arise when NNSEs communicate with NSEs: the fact that NSEs have a better command of the English language and that some of them do not seem to make much effort to make themselves understandable to NNSEs. Rogerson-Revell even shows NSEs confirming this by making self-critical comments such as “too many English [native] speakers do not make allowances in international gatherings” (117). Phillipson also mentions that NSEs can be the cause of communication problems (even though they talk more), that they have an “edge in many types of intercultural communication” and that they often succeed in “influencing outcomes” (167). He states that although NSEs have a better command of the language, this does not mean they are more sensitive towards using it appropriately: “In many international fora, competent speakers of English as a second language are more comprehensible than native speakers, because they can be better at adjusting their language for people from different cultures and linguistic backgrounds” (167).

Because communication problems between NNSEs and NSEs in international business concern multinational corporations (which have English as the official corporate language and where NSEs and NNSEs work side by side), researchers have proposed in-company language or awareness training for NSEs in which they will be taught how to accommodate to NNSEs (Charles; Jenkins). Because communication problems can have a negative effect on business and because the number of NNSEs keeps rising, NSEs have to start accommodating to NNSEs as well. It might be beneficial to multinational corporations if NSEs learned to adjust their language use to NNSEs and if they were

made aware of the different varieties of English, because this could reduce communication problems between NNSEs and NSEs.

Currently, NSEs are usually excluded from company language training. According to Kubota, many NNSEs try to improve their communicative skills in English by attending foreign language classes, whereas NSEs rarely receive training to develop communicative skills that are needed for interacting with NNSEs (48). However, multinational companies should not assume that NSEs are external to communication problems, just because they have a high command of the English language. Charles and Marschan-Piekkari express a similar thought:

As communication problems in [multinational corporations] are frequently associated with foreign language learning, NSs of English might well be seen to be external to the problem. However, as our Kone⁵ interviews showed, they, too, both have and cause communication problems. They should thus also be included in any training programme aimed at improving horizontal communication (5).

NSEs may not know how to change their language use and, more importantly, may not even be aware of the need for adjustment. NSEs have a world lingua franca for their mother tongue and as most NSEs do not speak a second language (see chapter 1.3), they might not be aware of what it is like not to be able to express themselves fluently in a language. Therefore, it might be beneficial if multinational corporations were to invest in language training in which NSEs are taught to adjust their language use to NNSEs. Support for the suggestion of including NSEs in language training can be found in the concluding remarks of Charles and Marschan-Piekkari, where they state that “for businesses, heightening awareness of communicative and cultural diversity and working on ways to increase mutual understanding of the Englishes used globally—whether NS or NNS— is of vital importance” (280). Furthermore, they emphasise that “whether native or non-native, communicators need to learn (*be taught!*) to listen and make situational adjustments” (ibid.).

⁵ Kone is the name of the company where the interviews were taken.

Such a design for training for NSEs would not have to be very complicated. Rozina mentions some areas in which NNSEs can experience problems when they are communicating with NSEs. They contain e.g. unfinished sentences, long complex sentences with several subordinate clauses, use of idioms and colloquialisms, speaking very quickly or while laughing and use of jargon (101). These elements could easily be adjusted by NSEs with proper training. In addition, Rogerson-Revell mentions suggestions made by NSEs about how they could adjust their language use to NNSEs. Most of them mention the same elements as Rozina; however, expressions such as “repeat ideas more than once in different ways” and “relate what you are saying to other people’s culture and situation” are also mentioned (115). In the training, NSEs could be made aware of these pitfalls and could be taught to adjust them. Furthermore, such a training could contain samples of NNSEs’ speech, or even in-class exercises with NNSEs, to make NSEs aware of different varieties of English. This could also help NSEs to understand NNSEs’ speech better, as Rogerson-Revell found from her research that “one or two [NSs] felt that ‘strong’ or ‘heavy’ accents of NNES could pose particular difficulties but the point was also made that over time these difficulties reduce as participants ‘acclimatise to English as spoken by different nationalities’” (114).

However, despite the fact that including NSEs in company language and awareness training is a relevant issue and that it can lead to positive effects in communication between NNSEs and NSEs, the main question that arises when talking about language training for NSEs is whether NSEs would be willing to participate in the proposed training and whether they would see the need to. One assumption is that they might not be willing to adjust their English to NNSEs because they could see English as *their* language and think adjustment is solely the responsibility of NNSEs (see chapter 1.3), or perhaps they might think that they are accommodating enough to NNSEs already. Jenkins, who goes as far as to say NSEs should learn English as an International Language (EIL), says about the attitudes of NSEs that “for centuries, ‘NSs’ have assumed it is the job of the others, the ‘NNSs’, to make their English intelligible to NSs. There has never been any question of the opposite scenario” (*The Phonology of English* 227). It is apparent that the willingness of NSEs to participate in language

and communication training is an important issue worth investigating before the design of any training models can take place. Before this can be investigated, a discussion of the role of NSEs in communication with NNSEs, as well as a discussion of ownership of English is needed in the current research.

1.3 NSEs - NNSEs Roles in Communication

Kachru writes that the new role of English as a language of international communication “puts a burden on those who use it as their *first* language, as well on those who use it as their *second* language” (*The Other Tongue* 67). According to Kachru, this responsibility demands an “attitudinal readjustment” on the part of NSEs as well as NNSEs (67). A similar idea is uttered in earlier work by Smith, who refers to communication as a two-way street: both speaker and listener share the responsibility for effective communication (8). In addition, Smith adds that “although native English speakers will need to change their attitudes and assumptions in shifting toward English as an international language, there are some needed changes for non-native speakers” (9), referring to NNSEs becoming more tolerant towards varieties of educated English and the ways other non-native speakers use English (9).

Furthermore, Lippi-Green states that in human interaction, listener and speaker should both share responsibilities for communication to take place. However, a speaker who uses “non-mainstream” language (NNSE) often carries all of the communicative burden, whereas the user of the dominant, “mainstream” language (NSE) feels justified to reject his/her listener role: “What we will see again and again in the case studies which follow is that members of the dominant language group feel perfectly empowered to reject their role, and to demand that a person with an accent carry the majority of responsibility in the communicative act” (Lippi-Green 70). Kubota speaks of “one-way accommodation” of Outer and Expanding Circle speakers of English to Inner Circle speakers of English. Outer and Expanding Circle speakers are often held responsible for miscommunication,

and this “inequality” is reflected in, for example, “prejudices and discrimination against speakers of non-mainstream US English at work places and campuses” (Kubota 47). Lippi-Green argues that “mutual responsibility” in communicative acts between NSEs and NNSEs is not always as equally divided as it should be and she finds it “surprising, even deeply disturbing,” that “many individuals who consider themselves democratic, even-handed, rational, and free of prejudice, hold on tenaciously to a standard language ideology which attempts to justify restriction of individuality and rejection of the *other*” (73). Numerous other books and articles have been written about NSEs’ attitudes towards non-native speaker accents of English. For example, Braj Kachru observes that “when it comes to recognizing and accepting the varieties within American English, or accepting non-native Englishes, Americans have shown reluctance, condescension, or indifference” (*The Other Tongue* 67).

In conclusion, NSEs have an important role in communication with NNSEs, not as “norm-setters”, but as “partners” of NNSEs, “regardless of their linguistic, social or cultural backgrounds when negotiating meaning for either intelligibility, comprehensibility, or interpretability, or all three” (Berns 329). However, in practice there still seems to be an imbalance in the division of responsibility in communication between NSEs and NNSEs.

This imbalance could also have to do with the fact that many NSEs do not speak a second or foreign language. The current president of the United States of America, Barack Obama, has said that he finds it embarrassing that he does not speak a foreign language and that it is important for schools in the United States of America to start teaching foreign languages. He further mentioned the matter of (most) US citizens not being able to speak a foreign language: “It's embarrassing when Europeans come over here, they all speak English, they speak French, they speak German. And then we go over to Europe and all we can say is *merci beaucoup*, right?” (Gavrilovic). According to the US Census 2000, 82 per cent of U.S. citizens speak only English at home. Over half of the 18 per cent of U.S. citizens that speak a language other than English say they speak Spanish besides English (Shin and Bruno). The number of people in the United States of America who speak a language besides

English is not shockingly low. However, it does contrast with the number of people in Europe who speak a foreign language. In 2000, the European Commission researched language use in the European Union by interviewing 15,900 European citizens about their language use. They found that 52.7 per cent of the European citizens that were interviewed claimed they could speak at least one foreign language and of the foreign languages they mentioned, English was stated most often (“Europeanen en Talen”). Strikingly, 66 per cent of the people who claimed not to speak a language other than their native language, were citizens of the United Kingdom: a country, like the United States of America, where English is the native language. Linda Parker, director of the Association for Language Learning, has said that “a major part of our [the British] problem is that English is a world language and we find it easy to manage in other countries and with speakers of other languages” (Robb).

Another important factor that plays a role in the issue of many NSEs not speaking a foreign language is foreign language teaching. Mike Tomlinson, a former chief inspector of English schools, has said that the English are “barbarians” when it comes to teaching foreign languages at schools (Robb). In the U.S., less than 30 per cent of elementary schools and around 50 per cent of middle schools offer foreign language instruction. Moreover, less than half of all high school students participate in foreign language classes (Beale). This is a sharp contrast with Europe, where over 90 per cent of children start learning English in elementary school and where taking two or more foreign languages in “upper secondary school” is mandatory in several countries (ibid.).

Because many NSEs do not speak a foreign language, they only have the option of speaking English to NNSEs. When NSEs talk English with NNSEs, they will often have an advantage because they can express themselves more easily in English than NNSEs can. Furthermore, because many NSEs have never learned a foreign language, they might be unaware of how difficult it can be to express themselves in a language they do not speak fluently. As a result of this unawareness, NSEs might be easier inclined to judge NSEs’ mistakes. Moreover, they might not think of adjusting their language use to NNSEs to make themselves easier to understand, because they do not know how to,

as they have never been non-native speakers of a language. NSEs that have learned a foreign language might accommodate to NNSEs quicker, or even naturally.

1.4 Ownership of English

As mentioned before, the extensive rise of the number of people in the world who now speak English has led to the fact that English is currently used more often as a lingua franca than any other language in the world (excluding Standard Mandarin used in China as a lingua franca) (Haberland 938). As discussed in chapter 1.2, close to 90 per cent of speakers of English are non-native speakers. Furthermore, English is often used in situations where NSEs are not even present (Haberland 939). This special position of the English language raises questions about who are the owners of the English language and whether a lingua franca can actually have owners.

Chisanga and Kamwamgamalu differentiate two schools of thought when it comes to ownership of English; the purist school (led by Prator, Quirk, and Quirk et al. among others) and the pragmatist school (led by Kachru and his associates) (91). The purists assert that the ownership of English lies with its native speakers and that varieties of English that are being developed outside of the Inner Circle are (incorrect) deviations from Inner Circle English. They often refer to World Englishes as “approximate systems, idiosyncratic dialects and interlanguage” (Chisanga and Kamwamgamalu 91). Furthermore, purists claim that when it comes to norms for the English language, allowing the use of different norms will prove to be unsuccessful because there should be existing norms, preferably the British or North-American norm (Haberland 941). On the other hand, pragmatists assert that the ownership of English lies with everyone who uses the language, and that “the legitimacy of non-native Englishes . . . needs to be considered in terms of the social, cultural and personal factors operating in the contexts in which these varieties are used” (ibid.).

In a presentation at a TESOL convention, Widdowson made some important remarks on ownership and maintenance of English. He claims that the English could have ownership of the

English language: “England is where the language originated and this is where the English (for the most part) live. The language and the people are bound together by both morphology and history. So they can legitimately lay claim to this linguistic territory. It belongs to them. And they are the custodians” (377). However, he goes on to say that English is now an international language, which NSEs can no longer claim as their own (382). According to Widdowson, a group is proficient in a language when they are able to make the language their own by possessing it and changing it to their advantage (382). However, not only native speakers of English are able to make the English language their own: Widdowson states there are several new Englishes that have gone through the process of “dynamic adaptation”. Dynamic adaptation is the process in which (foreign) users of a language change the language to their requirements, which shows they have a high command of linguistic proficiency in the language (384). In view of this, Widdowson proposes an alternative answer to the question of who owns the English language:

How English develops in the world is no business whatever of native speakers in England, the United States, or anywhere else. . . . The very fact that English is an international language means that no nation can have custody over it. To grant such custody of the language, is necessarily to arrest its development and so undermine its international status. . . . An international language has to be an independent language. (385)

However, according to Sylwia Scheuer, Widdowson appeals to native speakers of English and therefore “does not provide a recipe for making English an independent language in the minds of those *non*-native speakers who – for the time being at least – regard L1 users as rightful custodians of the modern lingua franca” (122). Scheuer thus wants to show that ownership of English is also a difficult matter for NSEs.

Attitudes towards ownership of English can differ from person to person, native or non-native. Jones and Bradwell, who are native speakers of English, think that citizens of the United Kingdom maintain old-fashioned views about the English language, which do not fit in the current globalised way of thinking (12). They go on to say that while citizens of the United Kingdom once

controlled the spread of English around the world, they are now one of the many “stakeholders” of the English language (12). According to Jones and Bradwell, “there needs to be recognition that people learn the language in their own terms and to their own ends”, and that these terms and needs do not relate to any of the countries of which English is the native language (ibid.).

However, other native speakers of English do not necessarily have to share this view on ownership of English. As stated before, it could well be that NSEs are opposed to having to adapt their language to NNSEs, because they feel English belongs to them and that NNSEs should do the adapting.

1.5 English in Dutch Business Context

The use of English in the Netherlands has risen distinctly over the last decade. In many primary schools, children already get (obligatory) English lessons in grades 5 and 6. This continues until the end of high school, as English is an obligatory language course in the Netherlands (Gerritsen and Nickerson 111). There are also many high schools in the Netherlands that introduce bilingual programmes in Dutch and English, and there are Dutch universities where students can sign up for studies that have English as the main language of teaching (ibid.). Furthermore, the use of English is also apparent in the media. Dutch television networks broadcast American and British television series and movies with subtitles and many Dutch commercials and advertisements contain samples of the English language. It happens often that English words have become so common and widely used in the Netherlands that numerous of them have been adopted into the Dutch language and even incorporated in Dutch dictionaries. Quell and Labrie investigate whether the knowledge of foreign languages in Europe has increased over the previous 40 years (counting from the start of the research). Their research is based on data of a Eurobarometer survey from 1994 about the foreign language abilities of citizens of different countries in Europe. This survey states that 71 per cent of the Dutch people questioned in 1994, claim they can hold a conversation in English (22). This number

is fairly high, especially compared to other European countries: for example, the survey states that 13 per cent of Spanish citizens, 19 per cent of Italian citizens and 35 per cent of German citizens say they can hold a conversation in English (Quell and Labrie 22).

The influence of the English language is also visible in the Dutch business context. Gerritsen and Nickerson state that “in the Dutch business context, English is undoubtedly the most important foreign language, and it seems that it is used as a L2 in certain genres, e.g. promotional documents, and in some contexts, e.g. communication within multinational corporations, but perhaps not (yet) all” (114). One area where the use of English is apparent is the area of promotional information targeted at young consumers. Commercials have been developed for children with slogans such as “Je bent trendy, hip en cool” (You are trendy, hip and cool) and “for supersoete en kissable lips” (For super soft and kissable lips), that combine Dutch with English words (Gerritsen en Nickerson 116). Furthermore, Gerritsen and Nickerson say that “in slogans, in annual general reports and in the genres used in internal communication within the Netherlands, there are numerous instances of an English-only policy being followed in communication with Dutch readers” (116). They claim that this has led to “intranational communication” in business contexts (ibid.).

Despite the fact that Dutch people are exposed to the English language on a daily basis in business as well as in general, and the fact that a large number of Dutch people say they can hold a conversation in English, it seems that not all Dutch people have a good command of the English language. Research by Gerritsen et al. shows that, although Dutch people say they are fairly good in understanding English, the majority of the people that were tested failed to give an accurate translation of the English that was used in Dutch television commercials: of the 82 per cent of the respondents who claimed they were able to give an accurate translation of a given fragment containing English, only 36 per cent could give an accurate translation. These results argue that Dutch people often overestimate their English language skills. However, it cannot be denied that the level of English in the Netherlands is higher than in most other countries, as the results of the Eurobarometer survey, discussed above, show. That Dutch citizens tend to have a high proficiency of

English compared to citizens of other countries in Europe has an effect on the current research, because only NSEs who work in the Netherlands were interviewed. This means the participants will talk about experiences they had with mostly Dutch colleagues. Because Dutch people can understand English fairly well, the participants might have come across fewer problems in communication than if they had worked in Spain or Italy, for example.

1.6 Aim of Research

The current research aims to investigate the willingness of NSEs to participate in work-initiated language or communication training. The research was realised by conducting interviews among eight participants, who work and live in the Netherlands, about the subjects training models for native speakers of English and ownership of English. Furthermore, the current research aims to gather more information from the participants that could help design training models for NSEs. The method for this research and the interview questions will be discussed in chapter 2 below. Chapter 3 will discuss the results of the interviews, which will be analysed in Chapter 4. A conclusion, as well as recommendations for further research, will be given in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Method of Research

This chapter will provide a justification of the method which was chosen for the current research. For the current research, the qualitative method was chosen to investigate the attitudes of NSEs towards the use of English in international business and their experiences in communicating with NNSEs.

2.1 Method of the Ethnographic Interview

The ethnographic interview is a means of information gathering that is often used in qualitative research. For the current research, Spradley's approach to the ethnographic interview was used. According to Spradley, ethnographic interviewing involves two processes: "developing rapport" and "eliciting information" (78). Eliciting information is beneficial for the development of rapport and establishing rapport will encourage the participants to talk freely about the subject of the interview. Therefore, it is important to keep participants talking (80). Descriptive questions are used to achieve rapport and they aim to elicit a large sample of speech from the participant and to encourage the participant to talk freely about a specific subject (79-85). Structural questions are used to gain specific information from the participant about a subject and to verify knowledge acquired from the interview (120-123).

2.2 The Interview Questions

The interview questions have been designed to find out more about the attitudes that NSEs have towards English used in international business, their experiences with communicating with NNSEs and their view on language training for NSEs in business. Even though previous research shows that some NNSEs find it difficult to communicate with NSEs, this does not necessarily require that the participants in the current research have had similar experience with NNSEs, especially since people

in the Netherlands tend to be seemingly proficient in English. Therefore, interview questions were created which could help determine whether or not the participants have had communication problems with NNSEs before, what the nature of these communication problems have been and how they would assess their own accommodation to NNSEs. Additionally, interview questions were created with the purpose of eliciting information about the attitudes of NSEs towards the ownership of English and about their willingness to participate in training in which they would learn how to adjust their language use to NNSEs. During the interviews, the current researcher asked the participants if they could give suggestions for the purpose of improving the proposed training model.

Firstly, informative questions were asked, to gain (and verify) information about the participants and their workplace. Most questions were descriptive questions, or general questions, to get participants talking about a subject. After the descriptive questions, the specific and structural questions were asked. Not every interview ran the same course, hence not all question appeared in each interview, nor were the questions always asked in the same order. At the end of the interview, each participant was asked to answer four scale rating questions, where they had to assign a number corresponding to their opinion about the subjects that were dealt with in the interview. The scale rating questions were included in the interviews, because this way the data could be compared easily with the use of numbers. The question were used in the interviews are stated below:

Informative questions:

- How old are you?
- Where were you born?
- What is your first language?
- Which culture do you associate yourself with the most?
- How long have you been in the Netherlands?
- Where do you currently work and how long have you worked there?

Descriptive or structural questions:

- How often do you have to communicate with non-native speakers of English?
- Could you tell me which different nationalities the people you work with have?
- Do the people you work with have a high or a low command of the English language?
- Do you use a specific variety of English/accent when you are at work?
- Do you ever come across communication problems at work?
 - If so, more often with non-native speakers or with native-speakers? Could you give me an example?
- Have you ever been directly addressed by a non-native speaker who had trouble understanding you?
 - Could you give me an example?
- Have you ever noticed that a non-native speaker had trouble understanding what you were saying without him/her telling you ?
 - If so, how did you notice and is this something you pay attention to?
- Why do you think a non-native speaker would have trouble understanding you?
- How lenient are you towards NNSEs mistakes?
 - Can you explain why?
- Do you consciously make changes in your speech when you are talking to non-native speakers of English?
 - If so, which? If not, what do you think you could do to make it easier for non-native speakers to understand you?
- How do you see your role (being a native speaker of English) at work when it comes to communication(problems)? Who do you think has more responsibility when it comes to communication problems; NSEs or NNSEs?
- What are your thoughts on ownership of English?
- Have you ever had any language/communication training that was initiated from work?
- Do you think you would be willing to participate in a training (where you would learn to accommodate to non-native speakers so it would be easier for them to understand you) if your work offered it to you? Why (not)?

Scale rating questions:

- On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is not important at all and 5 is very important), how important do you think it is for native speakers to accommodate their language use to non-native speakers?
- On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is not willing at all and 5 is very willing), how willing would you be to participate in a training where you would learn to accommodate your speech to non-native speakers?
- On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is not responsible at all and 5 is very responsible), how responsible do you think native speakers of English are when it comes to communication problems with non-native speakers at work?
- On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is not enough at all and 5 is more than enough), how much do you think native speakers of English in general are already accommodating to non-native speakers of English?

The interviews were conducted in English: the native language of the participants. However, it has to be noted that English is not the native language of the current researcher, which could have led to communication problems or misunderstandings between her and the participants that were not noticed at the time of interviewing. Furthermore, it has to be kept in mind that each interview is based on personal opinions and attitudes, and that participants might be inclined to rather give socially desirable answers than their honest opinions. Therefore, the results of the interviews are always biased and they should be treated with caution when they are used to make generalisations about a larger group.

2.3 The Participants

The selection of participants for the current research was shaped by specific requirements. Firstly, all participants had to be native speakers of English, although they did not necessarily had to come from the same country. By interviewing NSEs from different countries, it is possible to make observations for different cultures, which makes the scope of the research broader. Secondly, participants had to work in a company based in the Netherlands and they had to work together frequently with NNSEs.

Thirdly, all participants had to be based in the same country to limit too much discrepancy in English language proficiencies of their colleagues. This also had practical benefits, as the researcher lives in the Netherlands and she had to be able to interview participants face-to-face. Furthermore, to get a broader perspective on the attitudes and experiences of the NSEs that were interviewed, participants were allowed to come from different companies. Finally, participants could come from any position in a company. The data of all participants can be found in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: Participant information

Part. number	Age	Gender	Country of birth	First language	Time working in the Netherlands
1	29	Male	Peru*	English/Spanish**	1.5 years
2	27	Female	South-Africa	English	2 years
3	34	Female	Canada	English	11 years
4	31	Male	Canada	English	3 years
5	40	Male	US	English	6 years
6	38	Male	UK	English/Italian**	6 years
7	48	Male	New-Zealand*	English	17 years
8	24	Female	Australia	English	4 months

* Participants 1 and 7 both grew up in the UK

** Participants 1 and 6 are bilinguals

Participants were approached via different social networks on the Internet and via the personal network of the researcher. Beforehand, permission was asked from the participants to record the conversations. The interviews took place between May 21st and June 11th of 2011. The interviews were held during office hours and lasted approximately one hour. Three of the interviews took place

via Skype due to scheduling problems, the other ones took place at the work place of the participants or in lunch rooms.

Chapter 3: Discussion of the Results

The discussion of the interviews will be categorised into the following topics:

- (3.1) Communication problems on the work floor
- (3.2) Accommodation to NNSEs
- (3.3) Responsibility in communication and ownership of English
- (3.4) Foreign language ability
- (3.5) Language training
- (3.6) Scale rating questions

The topics in this chapter are divided according to the topics that are addressed in the interview questions. The topics will be dealt with one by one and each topic will discuss the answers given by the participants on the interview questions that cover the corresponding topic. Chapter 3.1 discusses communication problems with NNSEs that the participants have experienced at work. This topic needs to be discussed first because it is necessary to establish whether the NSEs who participated in the interview indeed experienced communication problems with NNSEs, in which NNSEs had trouble understanding them, to check whether the current research is relevant or not. Chapter 3.2 discusses the answers given by the participants on the issue of their way of accommodating to NNSEs. From this chapter will become clear whether the NSEs are already accommodating to NNSEs at work, and in which ways they accommodate to them. This information can eventually be used for the development of future training models for NNSEs. Chapter 3.4 discusses the attitudes of NNSEs towards having to adjust their language use to NNSEs. The participants were asked questions about the division of responsibility in communication between NSEs and NNSEs and about ownership of English, to be able to find out if they feel responsible to ensure successful communication as well and if they have possessive feelings over their native language. The information from chapter 3.3 can be used to assess whether NSEs are willing to accommodate to NSEs or not and whether ownership of

English plays a part if they are not willing. The topic of chapter 3.4, foreign language ability, was not originally adopted in the interview questions. However, when the participants mentioned it a couple of times themselves, the current researcher decided to take it into consideration. The information given in this chapter could be used for future training models, for example, to make NSEs more aware that it is not easy to express oneself in a foreign language and to create more understanding for NNSEs. Furthermore, it gives an explanation for the fact that many NSEs do not speak a foreign language. Chapter 3.5 gives an answer to the question whether the participants already participated in some kind of English language training and if so, what this training looked like. The suggestions made by the participants that could help improve future training models for NSEs will be discussed here as well. Finally, chapter 3.6 gives an overview of the results of the scale rating questions.

3.1: Communication Problems on the Work Floor

3.1.1. Communication with NNSEs

All of the participants stated that they have daily contact at work with NNSEs. Most of them claim that contact with NNSEs takes up to 90 – 99 per cent of their time at work. When asked about the different nationalities of their colleagues, Dutch was mentioned most often. Other nationalities that were mentioned include Indian, Chinese, Bulgarian, Turkish, Belgian, Italian, Spanish, Greek, Japanese, French, Venezuelan and Swedish. The vast number of different nationalities can be ascribed to the fact that the majority of the participants work in multinational organisations. All of the participants speak English at work. When they were talking about NNSEs at work, the participants did not make a clear distinction between native speakers of Dutch and other NNSEs: to them, a NNSE can be anyone who does not speak English as a native language. Participants 2, 3, and 4 speak a bit of Dutch but do not use it on the work floor. Participant 4 explained why, when asked if

he speaks English at work: “Yeah. Except when I try to speak to them in Dutch. For example, “wil je iets drinken⁶?” But if it has to do with business, then it’ll be in English, to be efficient.”

3.1.2. Oral Communication Problems

Five out of eight participants said that they have experienced communication problems on the work floor and that they more often concern NNSEs rather than other NSEs. The other three participants claimed that they have experienced some communication problems with NNSEs. However, these problems usually do not take place on the work floor but in the social context: “I guess most of the issues happen socially, when we go to lunch or something and they all speak their own language and maybe someone next to you would have to translate” (Participant 7). Participant 3 also experiences communication problems with NNSEs in a social context: “Well, most of my issues in communication are not in my work environment with non-native speakers. I have lots of examples from these sort of things in my personal life, like my life in Holland. But they’re not work related”.

The communication problems that the participants experienced vary in nature. The rate of speech of the NSEs was often mentioned as a cause for communication problems. The majority of the participants believe that if they speak too fast, NNSEs tend to find it difficult to comprehend what they are saying. Tense and sentence structure are other causes for communication problems that were mentioned. For example, participant 4 feels that tense can be confusing for NNSEs:

But I mean, one word can change the meaning of a whole sentence right? So, or past and present tense, or “was it done”, “is it done”, or “when is it done”, “has it been done”. The subtleties within that, if I say “yes”, when I thought “will it be done” meant “is it done”, you know there can be some confusion there.

Participant 1 said that he believes that communication problems can arise when “a sentence structure is very complicated and it contains, for example, two or three different tenses”. Another factor that has been mentioned to play a role in communication problems between NSEs and NNSEs

⁶ Translation: “Would you like to have something to drink?”

is vocabulary. A majority of the participants said they try to avoid using “big” or uncommon words when speaking to NNSEs, because NNSEs are likely not to understand them, especially when the NSEs also talk at a fast rate of speech. Participant 7 said that he sometimes has communication problems when he says a word that NNSEs have not heard before, very fast. He also thinks misunderstanding caused by using uncommon words could also happen between an American native speaker of English and a native speaker of English from the United Kingdom:

Often the Americans don't necessarily understand the word pavement. They only know sidewalk. It's often a one way street there as well. That's why I mentioned at the beginning it's not just second language, even between the American and the English speaker there's . . . it is the same language but they have different words for things and not all Americans necessarily understand them in English, which can lead to fun.

This relates closely to the use of cultural references. The latter example shows a word that might not be familiar to someone from another culture, while the following example shows that misunderstanding can be caused by cultural expressions as well:

“For example, we had a Turkish girl who used to work for us, and [we were] talking to her about another colleague, and then the colleague enters the room. Now, there's a English saying “speak of the devil” right? When you're talking about the person and then they come in. Well, this Turkish girl got really offended by me saying that. “Speak of the devil? How rude of you! Why would you say that about that person, that's so mean”. . . And I am shocked, because I have no idea what she's talking about. So after some discussion with her, it turns out that, well in Turkey, they have the saying like “say an angel's name and she appears” and “speak of the devil” is [used more] when someone you don't like comes into the room. So even though we were both speaking English, the cultural reference around this concept was different.” (Participant 4)

In this case it was not just a misunderstanding of vocabulary, but of a cultural reference. Both parties did not understand what the other actually meant until they talked it over. This shows that lack of

(inter)cultural knowledge can just as easily lead to communication problems between NSEs and NNSEs.

It is not solely language that can cause communication problems: they can be caused by work related factors as well. When asked about communication problems on the work floor, Participant 6 said that he often gets questions from staff members, NNSEs as well as NSEs, because he works in payroll and some of his colleagues do not understand “things regarding salary and benefits”.

Moreover, it is not always the case that communication problems are solely the responsibility of NSEs, as NNSEs can be unclear as well. For example, even though Participant 3 often has communication problems with NNSEs, she said that she thinks she is very clear but that the NNSEs she works with are often not: “I guess I usually feel that I’m clear, but I don’t, sometimes the communication problem comes from the non-English speaker how they word things or say things. And I find in my experience that tends to be where the communication problems come from.” These communication problems could possibly be caused by lack of vocabulary or grammatical knowledge on the part of NNSEs. Even though the interview questions for the current research did not take communication problems caused by NNSEs into consideration, it is important to note that NNSEs are also responsible for communication problems.

3.1.3 Written Communication Problems

When asked about communication problems they experienced at work, the participants often distinguished between oral and written communication problems. Some of them said they have experienced problems when communicating via e-mail with NNSEs, because the participants miss the non-verbal clues when they have to explain something:

And most problems I have come across in the business communication, have come from the written format. Because I think that it is even more difficult to explain in an e-mail . . . to get across what you want to say. . . . when I speak to them it’s fine because in a lot of the times

they can engage in my reaction and my expressions and my body language. But writing to them in a more formal way or in a business way because they can't read the body language or the expression, I find that it cuts a lot of the communication for them. (Participant 1)

Furthermore, some participants expressed that trying to resolve communication problems via e-mail can be a frustrating process. Participant 4 said that when a communication problem arises when he is e-mailing with a NNSE, solving it can be time consuming, while in face-to-face communication the problem can be solved much quicker. However, that e-mail can at times be insufficient when a communication problem has to be solved is not necessarily related to language proficiency and it could happen with communication between NSEs as well. Nevertheless, it is possible NSEs have more trouble solving a problem via e-mail with NNSEs than with other NSEs, because the non-verbal clues that are important in communication with NNSEs are missing in written communication.

Even though some participants expressed negative feelings towards written communication, not all of them are hesitant to e-mail their colleagues or clients. Some of the participants even prefer to use e-mail, because they find they have more time to write something down clearly. Participant 3 said that she prefers to communicate with NNSEs via e-mail, because when she writes an e-mail she has more time to phrase her thoughts in a way that is easy for NNSEs to understand. Using e-mail instead of face-to-face communication also gives her more time to think about the message that NNSEs mean to convey.

3.1.4 Dutch proficiency in English

The fact that the Dutch generally have a high proficiency in English, has an influence on the number and the nature of communication problems that the participants experience at work. A majority of the participants expressed that they have few communication problems with their Dutch colleagues, because the level of English of their colleagues is quite high. Participant 7 said that the English that is spoken by his Dutch colleagues is very good. He also works with people that come from other

countries, such as Romania, who have a more basic level of English compared to that of his Dutch colleagues. According to participant 8, her Dutch colleagues at ING, a Dutch bank, also speak English sufficiently. She ascribes their high proficiency in English to the international orientation of ING. Furthermore, participant 1 commented that his Dutch colleagues also speak English quite fluently and that he therefore does not experience many communication problems when he works with them. However, it does happen that he sometimes overestimates the level of English of his Dutch colleagues, and forgets that he is talking to NNSEs. When he overestimates the level of English of his Dutch colleagues, it sometimes leads to communication problems because he will speak too fast or will use more complicated words.

Participant 8 compared her current working situation in the Netherlands with her previous working situation in Hong Kong. She mentioned that she had more trouble communicating with Japanese colleagues in Hong Kong than she does when communicating with Dutch colleagues now. She also found the level of English spoken in Hong Kong to be lower than the level of English spoken in the Netherlands. Furthermore, Participant 3 mentioned she finds it difficult to communicate with vendors in India, because their strong accents sometimes makes it difficult for her to understand them. She believes that the difference in communicating with Indian colleagues and with Dutch colleagues is that the accent of Dutch colleagues does not cause any problems in communication. However, she also made a critical remark about the Dutch' level of English, with reference to the English used outside of business contexts:

So my work environment, and over the whole eleven years that I've worked here, pretty much all the non-native English speakers have had really quite high levels of English. But then in my personal life in Holland that's different, because my boyfriend's friends. . . they speak English but it's also a misconception that. . . [in Holland] everybody is fluent in English. And it also doesn't mean everyone is comfortable speaking English.

This shows that generalisations have to be avoided when it comes to English proficiency of the Dutch. It seems that while it is not necessarily true that everyone in the Netherlands speaks English fluently, the level of English spoken by the Dutch in business contexts is quite high.

3.2 Accommodation to NNSEs

3.2.1 Ability of Participants to Detect NNSEs' Miscomprehension

As mentioned in chapter 3.1, communication problems with NNSEs are not uncommon for the participants. In most instances, NNSEs will probably indicate if they have not understood something NSEs have said. However, NNSEs do not always specifically ask for clarification; sometimes they do not say anything that could point out their confusion. Most of the participants claimed they are often able to detect when a NNSE does not comprehend what they are saying. When they see this is happening, they will stop and they will try to clarify themselves to the NNSE. Participant 1, for example, said that he can infer from the body language of NNSEs whether they understand him or not: "They would just keep nodding. I can usually tell in their eyes and their facial expressions, when you've kind of lost them. Like their eyes will go . . . up and right or up and left. They're trying [to] think about what [I am] saying". Participant 5 also commented that it is important to pay attention to non-verbal elements when talking to NNSEs. He mentioned some non-verbal clues that can indicate that NNSEs do not comprehend what he is saying; when they do not understand what is being said, they will squint their eyes or they will turn their heads to the side. Other participants mentioned a "glazed look" and a confused facial expression as indicators for NNSEs' confusion.

However, when it comes to communication with NNSEs that is not face-to-face, it becomes much harder for the participants to make sure they are being understood, because in such situations non-verbal communication signs are lost. Participant 6 said that when he talks to NNSEs on the phone, he tries to pay attention to certain signals that can help him determine if they understand him or not. An examples of such a signal is the manner in which NNSEs talk on the phone: they

sound unsure or confused and they make use of repetition. However, he believes that noticing confusion on the phone still remains difficult and that it is much easier in face-to-face communication to check if he is understood.

Overall, it seems that the participants are lenient towards NNSEs' mistakes. They say they have become used to the mistakes, because most of them have been living and working abroad for a long period of time and because some of them are open-minded and have travelled often. Participant 8 mentioned her open-mindedness as a reason why she is lenient towards NNSEs' mistakes: "Because I travelled a lot, I think I'm maybe more open-minded. I definitely like meeting people from different cultures and I don't expect them to speak English perfectly of. Most of the time I understand them and sometimes you don't really even need words." The notion that language does not necessarily need to be grammatically correct for people to understand one another is shared by Participant 5, who has studied linguistics at university level. Because of his background, he approaches language as "the human language" and he feels that as long as "you're getting your meaning across, the formal rules of grammar don't matter so much." He also said that he has an international personality and that he wanted to come to Europe to experience everything for himself, which could indicate he was aware of the fact that NNSEs can make mistakes in their English. Also cited by the participants as a reason for being lenient towards NNSE mistakes, is the fact that the majority of them do not speak a foreign language. According to participant 7, he does not judge NNSEs mistakes because he does not speak any foreign languages himself: "It's not a competition about how clever I can be, because I don't speak any other languages". Participant 6 is also lenient toward NNSEs mistakes, but when he is with friends that are NNSEs he tries to correct their mistakes, because they appreciate it. However, at work he does not always feel comfortable to correct mistakes made by his colleagues who are NNSEs, because he is afraid of offending them:

If [I am] at work I'm a bit more reluctant to [correct mistakes], but at university when I was with friends and they were learning English I would point out their mistakes and they would

appreciate it because they would know where they made mistakes But of course at work, I don't want to always [do] that because. . . they might feel undermined, you know.

Participant 4 also has hesitations when it comes to correcting mistakes NNSEs make when he is at work. This is due to the fact that he was taught it is "rude or impolite" to correct someone's English. However, his colleagues press him to correct their mistakes anyway: ". . . but everybody at my work is like "no, no you have to correct me while I'm talking, you have to you have to". I feel uncomfortable sometimes, but I try to do it every now and then when it's a glaring mistake, but the small things, I usually let it slide".

It seems that the NSEs that were interviewed are very lenient when it comes to NNSEs' mistakes. This can be ascribed to the fact that they are used to them because of their international background and because they are open-minded and internationally oriented. However, not every NSEs has an international background or is internationally oriented. Therefore, the opinions of the NSEs that were interviewed should not be used as a generalisation that is applicable to all NSEs.

3.2.2 Accommodation Participants' Language Use to NNSEs' Levels

Most of the participants think they do adjust their language use to NNSEs' levels. When they were asked how they would adjust their language use to NNSEs, they mentioned various ways of accommodation. For example, Participant 6 tries to speak without an accent when he is talking to NNSEs because he is aware that an accent might be difficult for NNSEs to understand: "Well I try to speak without an accent. I try not to come out with something that's typically English. . . Maybe they have learnt their English in America you know." Other ways of accommodating to NNSEs that were mentioned are slowing down the speech rate, enunciating clearly and making "simple" sentences: "I speak slower and I enunciate more. I'll choose simple words and put them in like a normal sentence, kind of a simple English, not elaborating too much. I'll try to stick two clauses in one sentence, maybe three" (Participant 4). Another thing that participants said they do to adjust their language use to NNSEs is adding more repetition to the conversation if they notice their conversation partner does

not comprehend what they are saying. Moreover, avoiding colloquialisms and very advanced vocabulary is also something participants do to adjust their language use to NNSEs. Participant 3 said she always tries to actively listen to someone, because she has noticed that filling words in for someone can lead to communication break-downs. Lastly, non-verbal communication is also something that can help a NSEs to accommodate to NNSEs. For example, Participant 2 says she uses a lot of “hand actions” so NNSEs will be able to understand her better.

However, it is not the case that the participants automatically adjust their language use to all NNSEs they talk to, because sometimes it is simply not necessary. The participants said that it depends on who they are talking to. Participant 1 stated that he usually does not have trouble being understood and that he sometimes even forgets he is talking to NNSEs because the English spoken by his Dutch colleagues is very high:

Well there probably have been a few minor, where I have to repeat what I’m saying or use a different word because perhaps I thought sometimes a person speaks English so well, an English speaker forgets that they’re a foreign speaker. You see what I mean? So because you forget you might get carried away and start using words that may be too advanced or too complicated you know? So I have to bring it down a little bit but usually I have no problems.

Participant 2 also said she does not have to adjust her language use to NNSEs often, because her direct colleagues have a high level of English.

One important thing that participant 7 stressed, is that accommodation to NNSEs should not be so blatantly done that they would be offended by it:

But it’s all about the recipient isn’t it? Because you don’t want to embarrass someone, having them stood there feeling like an idiot, because I was unwilling to come down to his level of language. . . . the joke would be to “speak louder and slower and shout to Johnny Foreigner”. No, these are people you work with every day and you also get used to it. You wouldn’t say to somebody “I need you to go and take a car, proceed to the airport, and greet somebody coming off an aeroplane”. What we say is “go to the airport, and I want you to meet so and

so and bring him back". That's it. You just keep it simple, you don't have to be condescending.

It seems that being careful not to offend colleagues who do not speak English as a native language is important for the participants. This is also apparent from chapter 3.2.1, where comments can be found about participants being hesitant to correct NNSE colleagues, because they are afraid to offend their colleagues.

In all, the participants seem to be very considerate towards NNSEs and they consciously adjust their way of speaking to NNSEs when they think it is necessary. Participant 4 even commented about accommodating his language use to NNSEs that it "comes naturally". He says that even if NNSEs refuse to accommodate to NNSEs, they would eventually "just give up and do it anyway", because otherwise they could not do their jobs properly. In addition, participant 3 stressed that it is about communication and what is best for the company and about the goal people want to achieve in business.

3.2.3 Permanent Change of Participants' Language Use

The fact that the participants are all sensitive towards NNSEs and adjust their language use to them (for some of the participants this even happens naturally), has had an influence on the permanent use of language of some of the participants. Participant 4 commented that he now speaks English at a lower speed than before he moved abroad:

I've changed the way I speak so much so that when I go home . . . I stutter and stumble on words . . . I have to search for words to use, and it has never been like this before. And it gets worse every year. . . . when I went back home all my friends would say "you talk so slow" for example.

Participant 3 has also noticed a change in her way of speaking. She has noticed that because she has lived and worked abroad for a long time, she now speaks English at a lower speech rate than before:

I think when I started working, you sort of have a sensitivity to it, so you speak slower and you don't choose the big words when you can use a simple word. . . . But if that's always the way you speak, that ends up becoming how you speak. And my family notices it. They're like, "you speak so slowly", and I'm like "you speak so fast!"

Participant 5 has undergone a similar experience. He says that he has even lost his accent, which makes it difficult for people to guess where he is from originally:

In fact, when I go back home for visits, people tell me that I sound completely different. I've basically lost my accent and I tend to articulate all of my letters and consonants. I think it has definitely changed, living here has definitely changed the way I speak English. Also, often when I meet people here they can't place me. Sometimes they think I'm British, which sounds a little crazy to me, [because] I don't have a British accent really. Other people mistake me as Canadian and sometimes people . . . got me pecked as an American, but they can't quite figure out what part of America I'm from.

It seems that working and living abroad can permanently change the natural way of speaking of NSEs.

3.3 Responsibility in Communication and Ownership of English

3.3.1 Responsibility in Communication

The opinions of the participants on whom has more responsibility to ensure successful communication between NSEs and NNSEs seem to be divided. There are participants who think that the responsibility should lie with both NNSEs and NSEs, as well as those who think the responsibility should lie more with NSEs. Participant 7 said about the division of responsibility in communication, that "it's a two way street" and that it is his responsibility to make himself understood to NNSEs and the responsibility of NSEs to not "make it hard" for NNSEs to understand them. However, he also feels that it is the responsibility of the NNSEs to ask for clarification if he or she does not understand

what is being said. Furthermore, he stressed that in his organisation, the people are there to “get their job done”, and that it is therefore important for both NSEs and NNSEs to share the communicative burden. Participant 2 expressed a similar thought, saying that fifty per cent of the role is on her part and that the other fifty per cent lies on the part of the people she communicates with.

Participants 1 and 5 also believe the burden should be shared, but stressed that NNSEs have a responsibility to have a good command of the English language if they work in an international company. Therefore, participant 1 found it surprising that people who fill high positions in his company, do not speak English properly enough:

Yes, then I would think it's their [NNSEs] responsibility. I mean, you have different levels of business. For example, we recently got a new director in our organisation . . . it's an organisation that does projects all over the world. And we just got a director who at his first meeting in the organisation started speaking Dutch. And then already you've got a lot of people in that place for who maybe Dutch is a second third language, or even like myself who don't speak it at all. So you feel almost offended by it. In a normal context I wouldn't be offended because I live in Holland and I should've learnt Dutch. But in that context we were upset because you should know we are an international company and have an international taskforce and therefore you should speak English. Also, his English is not very good, in fact we were surprised he got hired with his level of English when he's got to represent the organisation in Geneva, Cameroon, or whatever.

However, when it comes to communication problems, he thinks the responsibility to prevent or fix them lies with NSEs:

I look at it always as the responsibility of the person who speaks English to try and improve his communication . . . I think it's only normal that the responsibility lies with the native speaker to try and improve the communication between the two people.

Participant 5 believes he has more responsibility in communication because he is “the carrier of the language”. However, he also believes that NNSEs have to be willing to learn English. In the end it comes down to teamwork, he says:

. . . I work with [a judge] who's from Germany, who has really good English, until he gets upset. So when we're in a meeting and he's trying to battle these other judges, he wants me by his side because he loses his English. . . he'll start to get red in the face and his English just disappears and he looks at me because I know what arguments he wants to make and then I'll . . . fill in the blanks.

There are also participants who said that the responsibility of the communicative burden lies mostly with the NSEs. Participant 4 thinks NSEs should take more responsibility to ensure successful communication between NSEs and NNSEs, because NSEs “have more resources available to them to dig deeper and to try to get clarification”, whereas NNSEs have limited resources because English is not their native language. Participant 8 feels the same, claiming it is her responsibility to make herself understood to NNSEs.

Nevertheless, the responsibility of the communicative burden could be divided differently when conversation does not take place in a business context, but, for example, in a leisure context. As participant 7 already pointed out, in the business context the “job has to be done” and therefore everybody has to work hard to make sure communication is successful. Moreover, NSEs in an international business setting are more likely to be sensitive towards ensuring successful communication because they have experience in working with NNSEs, unlike tourists from the United States of America, for example, who are visiting a foreign country.

3.3.2 Ownership of English

It does not seem that the participants feel that the English language belongs to them, nor that they have a strong feeling of ownership of English. They also do not think that because they are native

speakers of English, NNSEs should be only the ones to take responsibility in communication between NSEs and NNSEs. Chapter 3.2 has shown that for most of the participants, especially the ones that have been abroad for a longer period of time, accommodation to NNSEs comes naturally. In some cases it came even so naturally that their use of their native language has changed altogether, even outside the business context. Participant 3 thinks that accommodating to NNSEs at work improves communication in the work-place, which ultimately is beneficial to the company:

Well, you know if you're trying to reach a goal in business, you know everyone is there for the company right? And communication is a key aspect. . . . so whether it's your own language or not, the common goal is to work better for the company. . . . I don't think it should be an issue that it's my language, because it's for the company's interest.

It seems that, for participant 3, the business context is an important motivational factor for adjusting her language use to NNSEs and is valued over the sense of having ownership of English.

Participant 4 can understand why some NSEs are opposed to having to adjust their language use to NNSEs. According to him, they could think that as they are working in an international company where English is the default language, the NNSEs "should be able to come to [their] level" and that they should not have to "dummy [themselves] down". However, he goes on to say that he thinks the problem usually does not lie with NSEs. He believes that accommodating to NNSEs comes naturally: ". . . even if you take the rudest person you can find, who's like "screw that, I'm not budging", they will out of frustration eventually just give up and [adjust their language] anyway. I think it's more being forced upon somebody that would make them negative towards the idea. I think that would maybe more be the problem, because like I said, you naturally do it anyway".

Participant 7 even stated that he thinks ownership of English is "a joke". He said he was quite surprised to see how well people in his organisation speak English: not only lawyers, but also the people who "move the furniture around". He likes to make a joke out of ownership of English. For example, when he was talking about languages with his colleagues, he once said: "Listen mate, if you can speak English proper like I does, then you can tell me", the joke being the grammatical

incorrectness of the fragment *like I does* and *proper*. He said he mostly uses jokes about languages with his American colleagues, because they are native speakers as well and he would never want to tease NNSEs about their language ability. He also commented that accommodating to NNSEs is something that comes with the job:

If you come in here in this organisation thinking they [NNSEs] should speak it [English], you'll soon be cut down to size. I mean I can sit here and be like "oh you didn't know the word sympathise properly? Well, how dumb of you" but then [they] actually speak another four languages. And I still can't speak any. . . . you'd have to be incredibly arrogant to have that sort of view and you would also probably be very unpopular.

Refusing to adjust his English to NNSEs is clearly not an option for him. Apart from the fact that someone would probably be considered arrogant because of this way of thinking, it would also result in problems in communication, which, in effect, can be bad for the company.

Participant 8 said she sees English rather as a world language than as something NSEs possess. Just like participant 7, she thinks it is great that so many people speak English as a foreign language so well and thinks it is embarrassing that she can only speak one language. More participants made the same remark; they are impressed that so many people speak English as a foreign language, while they cannot speak one.

However, the fact that the participants adjust their language use almost naturally to NNSEs and they seemingly have no problem with this, does not mean all other NSEs working in international business view having to adjust their language use to NNSEs in the same light. Participant 4 commented that she has seen American colleagues who do not accommodate to NNSEs enough:

Americans they don't talk slower. . . when they're in a conference room with five people and like you're in Holland with like two or three people also in a conference room, they just talk through each other so they make it difficult [for NNSEs] to understand them. I guess they don't really think about it, they don't really think that other people maybe have a little bit harder time understanding. They also can be slightly patronising, because when I speak with

them . . . they would say “oh boy your English is really good!”. And I’m like “well I hope so, I’m from Canada”.

Furthermore, she commented that while her British colleagues are less condescending than her American colleagues, they often do not take accent in consideration; they do not think about how difficult it can be for NNSEs to understand them. She comments that sometimes even she cannot understand some of the accents of her British colleagues if they do not speak slowly.

3.4 Foreign Language Ability

During the interviews, many participants made comments about their foreign language ability and whether it influences their communication with NNSEs. Only a few of the participants speak a foreign language. Participants 1 and 6 are both bilinguals, English/Spanish and English/Italian respectively, while other participants have only learned the basics of a foreign language. Participant 1 commented that it would probably be more difficult for a British person without foreign language skills to adapt to NNSEs than it would for him, because he was raised bilingually:

I think as soon as you start learning another language, it definitely helps. That’s one of the things I have noticed here in Holland that a lot of people are bilingual and they express themselves very clearly. Even when they come across someone who speaks French then they will speak French. It’s much simpler for them to understand each other than, for example, for a British person who’s never spoken French to speak to a French person.

However, he does not think this advantage is only limited to bilinguals, but that people who learn a second or a foreign language at a later age will benefit from the same advantages. He believes that if NNSEs learn a foreign language, they will learn to understand NNSEs better, because then they will know what it is like not to be able to express themselves fluently in another language. Participant 3, who has studied French and some Dutch, expressed a similar opinion. She feels that by learning a foreign language, it is easier to understand the viewpoint of NNSEs and they will understand

someone is not “stupid” if they make mistakes in their English. Participant 8 said that by learning a foreign language, NSEs would have some understanding of linguistics and how language works, which could create more understanding for NNSEs and help NSEs to accommodate to them. Participant 4, who has studied French and some Dutch, also said that if NSEs have learned a foreign language, it makes it easier to understand NNSEs and to accommodate to them: “. . . [being able to accommodate to NNSEs] is also something you only pick up on after practice. You start seeing the way they express their ideas so. You’ll kind of adopt it.”

Participant 5 does not speak a foreign language fluently, but he wishes he did. He stresses that it is helpful to speak another language, because with the language, one learns about the culture of the country as well:

I really wish I did speak some of these other languages. For example if I'm with my friends who are all from different countries, you know, they are fluent in English, but you still don't get it. You're not really immersed in the other language. . . if we're all communicating in English, and I could speak Spanish or Macedonian as well, I could see a whole new side of that person.

However, he also comments on the fact that it is fairly easy in the Netherlands to get by without learning Dutch, because most Dutch people have at least some command of English. This is why he does not feel a strong motivation to learn Dutch, while for him, having a strong motivation to learn a language is an important factor for success. According to Participant 5, lack of motivation, combined with the fact that learning a foreign language is not obligatory in all schools in the United States of America, is the reason why a lot of Americans do not speak a foreign language. Participant 7, who is originally from the United Kingdom, said the same about the foreign language abilities of British people. He blames the fact that learning a foreign language is not obligatory in the UK and that it does not start early enough. He had his first French lesson when he was fourteen, while foreign language classes in some countries in Europe start when children are at the age of seven. Furthermore, he also stated that he does not need to speak Dutch to get by in the Netherlands: “I

never ever been stuck in Holland with a language problem. . . everybody speaks English very, very well and at all ages, which is always very surprising”.

Participant 6, who is also a bilingual, gave an example of how language training can benefit NSEs. He says that learning how people from different countries pronounce English words made him more tolerant **of** NNSE mistakes:

My mother at one point started teaching the course English as a foreign language. She talked about the way. . . you have to learn about different people make different mistakes in English. Like Chinese people make this mistake and Italians another . . . And it’s also about linguistics . . . how that person moves the tongue around. So I was aware of it. I guess there’s always . . . ignorant people that make fun of [pronunciation errors] . . . but they shouldn’t really. I was aware of that, so even before I started to learn a different language I realised that the way that I speak Spanish, I can also make mistakes.

With this example, he shows how language training can be used to make NSEs aware of different varieties and accents of NNSEs. More importantly, he says that this has made him more understanding of NNSEs and that it has helped him to be more lenient towards NNSE mistakes.

3.5 Language Training

3.5.1 Previous (Work-Initiated) Language Training

None of the participants have had work-initiated English language training. They were excluded from English language training at work because they are native speakers of English. None of the participants has had a language course in which they are taught how to adjust their language use to NNSEs. Some of the participants participated in other foreign language courses that were work-initiated, such as French and German courses.

3.5.2 Willingness to Participate in Proposed Training for NSEs

Out of the eight participants that were interviewed, two were a bit hesitant towards (work-initiated) language training for NSEs in which they would learn how to adjust their language use to NNSEs in business. Participant 7 did not see the need to participate in such a course, because he thinks he already has sufficient skills to communicate successfully with NNSEs, and because he thinks such a course would be at the level of “speak[ing] to the non-native slowly and loudly”. He is afraid that the proposed training would focus on stereotypes and teach NSEs to talk to NNSEs in a patronising manner. Participant 8 is not enthusiastic about participating in such a course for the same reasons as those of participant 7: she feels that she can make herself sufficiently understandable to NNSEs already and she does not want to be taught how to “speak like a little kid for people to understand you”. Furthermore, she said that there are other options that are more attractive to her, such as language exchange groups on Couchsurfing.org. She does not want to sit in a class and she feels more comfortable going to “meet-up groups”, where she can become friends with people and have casual conversations with them.

The other participants would be interested in participating in language training in which they would be taught how to adjust their speech to NNSEs to make themselves better understood. They do not seem to be offended by the fact that they would have to participate in language training even though they are NSEs. However, they do say that this also depends on the way the company or organisation proposes the training, and on the content of the training. Participant 1 commented that he is very interested in participating in the proposed training, as he travels often and he notices the differences in communication between different countries: “For myself, it would be interesting because I travel quite a bit and the way I communicate with someone in Holland is completely different from the way I communicate with someone in Africa or the Middle-East”. However, he stressed that he is afraid such a training would be “too simple” for him, as he is already experienced in communication with NNSEs. Therefore, he feels that such a training would have to go beyond “common sense stuff”, such as how to socialise with someone, for example.

Participant 3 also sees the advantages the proposed training could have for her career. She said such training would be relevant for her because she works in an “international environment” and she wants to learn how she can communicate with people effectively, because she works in marketing. However, she would like to see such a training in the form of a workshop, where both NNSEs and NSEs would work together on how to improve their communication, as she believes the communication burden should be shared equally by NNSEs and NSEs.

Participants 3 and 4 would both be interested in the proposed training and said they think that such a training would be interesting for international companies. Participant 3 gave the example of Shell as a company that would be suitable for such trainings. She says that such training would, for example, also be helpful for, for example, Americans who come to the Netherlands to work here for six months or more and who have not worked in an international environment before. Participant 4 thinks such a training would work best in a company where people with few different cultures work. He feels that if such training focuses on many different cultures and languages, it will stay superficial and “you’ll never get that deep into it”. If such training focuses, for example, solely on the language of the country the expats are working in, it could really go into detail and be more relevant for the NSEs, as they could put what they have learned into practice right away.

Participant 5 was also interested in participating in the proposed language training: “I think that if I saw a posting at work that was asking native speakers of English to attend a course for non-native speakers to add input or a course for native English speakers on how to better themselves in the context of non-native speakers, I think I would be interested in that. I think it’s something I would participate in”. He went on to say that he thinks that most people in his organisation would be interested in the proposed language training, especially if it deals with topics such as giving a presentation for NNSEs or drafting e-mails.

Participant 6 said that he would be interested in participating in the proposed language training as well, even though he does feel he is very aware of language and communication already, because he has studied linguistics. He believes the proposed language training would be very suitable

for “the private sector”, because he feels that NSEs need to be able to adjust their language use to NNSEs if they work abroad and that they “have to [learn to] deal with a foreign office”.

3.6 Scale Rating Questions

To get a clear overview of the opinions of the participants on the most important topics of the research, they were asked to assign a number on a scale of 1 to 5 on 4 different topics we discussed.

The questions were the following:

- On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is not important at all and 5 is very important), how important do you think it is for native speakers to accommodate their speech to non-native speakers?

- On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is not responsible at all and 5 is very responsible), how responsible do you think native speakers of English are when it comes to communication problems with non-native speakers at work?

- On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is not enough at all and 5 is more than enough), how much do you think native speakers of English in general are already accommodating to non-native speakers of English?

- On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is not willing at all and 5 is very willing), how willing would you be to participate in a training where you would learn to accommodate your speech to non-native speakers?

The results of the scale rating questions can be found in table 3.1 below:

	Score of importance NSEs accommodating to NNSEs	Score of responsibility of NSEs in communication	Score of NSEs already accommodating to NNSEs	Score of willingness to participate on language training
Participant 1	5	2.5	3	3
Participant 2	3	2.5	5	5
Participant 3	3	3	3	5
Participant 4	5	2.5	4	4
Participant 5	5	3	3	4
Participant 6	5	4	3	5
Participant 7	5	4	5	3
Participant 8	4	4	4	3
Average	4.4	3.2	3.8	4

Table 3.1: Overview of result of the scale rating questions from the interviews⁷.

The results can be used to check whether the answers given in the interviews correspond with the number they assigned to each topic. Table 3.1 shows that, on average, the participants feel that it is very important for NSEs to adjust their language use to NNSEs. This corresponds with the findings in chapter 3.2, where most of the participants said that they adjust their language use to NNSEs at work. When it comes to responsibility in communication, the participants score an average of 3.2, which reflects the findings in chapter 3.4.1. In regards to communication problems at work, most participants feel that the responsibility should lie with NSEs as well as with NNSEs, thus rating it with a 2.5 or a 3. Three out of the eight participants feel that the responsibility lies a little bit more on the

⁷ Some participants preferred the answer “somewhere in the middle” on the scale of 1 to 5, which resulted in the answer 2.5.

side of NSEs, thus rating the question with a 4. There is a slight deviation here from the findings in chapter 3.4.1, as participant 7 rated this topic with a 4, signifying he thinks NSEs have more responsibility, while during the interview he stated that he thinks communication is a “two way street”. It could be that during the interview, participant 7 changed his opinion, or he could have misinterpreted the question. Furthermore, the participants feel that NSEs are already accommodating their speech to NNSEs considerably, as they rate the question with an average of 3.8. There was no specific question about this topic during the interview, which makes this new information. Lastly, when it comes to willingness to participate in a language training in which they would be taught how to adjust their language use to NNSEs, the participants rate this question with an average of 4. This shows that they have a positive attitude towards the proposed training. Congruent with chapter 3.5.2, participants 7 and 8 are less open towards the proposed training, but they are not against it either, as they rate the question with a 3. Even though during the interview participant 1 said he would be willing to participate in the proposed training, he rated his willingness on the scale with a 3 only.

Chapter 4: Analysis

It appears that the importance of the aspect of business in BELF, as Charles claims in “Language Matters in Global Communication,” is not just limited to BELF users, or NNSEs. From the interviews it is apparent that the participants think that the business aspect is most important as well. It is important for them to “get their jobs done” and therefore NSEs as well as NNSEs have the responsibility to make sure communication runs smoothly. Furthermore, most of the participants said that NNSEs are allowed to make mistakes and that the formal rules of grammar are not that important when they communicate with NNSEs: what is important is that NNSEs can get their meaning across. Their opinions are compatible with Charles, who says that within BELF communication skills are more important than language skills (266).

Although the participants state that they have had communication problems with NNSEs where NNSEs did not comprehend what they were saying, the actual number of these communication problems does not seem to be very high. This low number does not correspond with research discussed in chapter 1.2, which shows many cases of NNSEs having communication problems with NSEs because they have difficulties understanding them (Charles and Marschan-Piekkari; Rogerson-Revell; Kankaanranta and Planken). That the participants did not report many instances of communication problems with NNSEs, could have to do with the fact that the NSEs that were interviewed work mostly with Dutch NNSEs, who, according to the participants, have a fairly high command of the English language. Moreover, only NSEs were asked about communication problems with NNSEs, which excludes the point of view of NNSEs from the current research. The participants could only talk about cases in which NNSEs made it clear that they did not understand the NSEs, or cases where the participants thought NNSEs could not understand them. If NNSEs had also been interviewed, more communication problems might have been discovered. Because the current research only focuses on communication problems caused by NSEs, it does not become clear from

the interviews in how far NNSEs were the cause of communication problems. Nevertheless, fact is that NNSEs are also responsible for communication problems, where NSEs do not understand them because of the lower level in English proficiency of NNSEs. The current research focuses on language training for NSEs, because they are being outnumbered by NNSEs and therefore it is necessary that they also adjust to NNSEs instead of solely the other way around.

Moreover, research by Rogerson-Revell shows NSEs saying that they think NSEs do not make enough effort to make it easier for NNSEs to understand them (117). While it is difficult to decide when NSEs make enough effort to adjust their language use to NNSEs, the participants in the current research said they do make conscious effort to adjust their language use to NNSEs. Furthermore, the majority of them said they are willing to participate in training in which they would be taught how to improve their accommodation skills, if such a course were offered to them. The willingness of the participants to accommodate to NNSEs can be explained by the fact that most of the interviewed NSEs have worked and lived abroad for a longer period of time and have therefore acquired more experience in communicating with NNSEs.

In consideration of the responsibility in the communicative burden, the opinion of the majority of the participants seems congruent with claims made by Kachru, Smith and Lippi-Green: the responsibility in communication should be divided equally between both NSEs and NNSEs. There were also three participants who feel NSEs have more responsibility to ensure successful communication with NNSEs, because NSEs have more resources compared to NNSEs, since English is their native language. Nevertheless, it seems that the “attitudinal readjustment”, which Kachru says is necessary on the part of NSEs, is already present with the NSEs that were interviewed for the current research (*The Other Tongue* 67). However, it is remarkable that none of the participants believe that the responsibility to ensure successful communication between NSEs and NNSEs should lie more with NNSEs. This could be their honest opinion, but it is also a possibility that the participants wanted to give socially desirable answers and therefore did not want to say they believe that the responsibility

should lie more with NNSEs. It is also a possibility that they did not want to offend the current researcher, who is a NNSE.

Furthermore, the participants do not seem to have a strong sense of ownership of the English language, which could explain why they are not opposed to adjusting their language use to NNSEs. However, it should be noted that the NSEs that were interviewed are all part of an international business context, which makes them more experienced with the use of English outside native contexts than NSEs who do not work in the international business context. Therefore, their opinions are not suited to represent NSEs in general.

The fact that the majority of the participants do not have extensive knowledge of a foreign language is congruent with research about foreign language ability of NSEs in chapter 1.3. Chapter 3.4 shows that most NSEs do not speak a foreign language because the need is not high, since most people in Europe have at least some command of English. Furthermore, it seems that there are differences in the educational systems in Europe and in the United Kingdom and the United States of America, for example; NSEs are often not obliged to learn a native language in school, whereas most NNSEs in Europe are. The discussion of the interviews also shows that NSEs who are able to speak a foreign language believe that this ability has an influence on their accommodation to NNSEs. According to participant 1, who is a bilingual, NSEs who have learned foreign language will experience that speaking in another language is not always easy; this experience will increase their understanding of NNSEs and it will make NSEs more inclined to adjust their language use to NNSEs. Furthermore, participant 4 said that if NSEs learn a foreign language, they will understand the ways in which NNSEs express themselves better and are able to adjust to NNSEs more easily because they will use such ways of expression themselves when they speak in a foreign language. That learning a foreign language can improve someone's accommodation skills is also stated by Phillipson, who says that (competent) NNSEs are more comprehensible than NSEs because they can successfully adjust their language use to people of various linguistic backgrounds (167). This information can be used for

future training models for NSEs, in the form of awareness-raising exercises. For example, foreign language exercises or games could be added to the training, such as exercises where NSEs have to ask each other for directions in a foreign language, or where they have to interview each other in a foreign language. When NSEs are confronted with the challenges of speaking in a foreign language, they might be more understanding of NNSEs and might be easier inclined to accommodate to them.

The results of the interviews confirm the claim made by Kubota that NSEs rarely receive training to develop communicative skills that are needed for interacting with NNSEs, as none of the participants who were interviewed ever participated in such a training (48). However, the majority of the participants are very willing to participate in such a training, should it be offered to them by their employers. Charles and Marschan-Piekkari state that “for businesses, heightening awareness of communicative and cultural diversity and working on ways to increase mutual understanding of the Englishes used globally—whether NS or NNS— is of vital importance” (280). This statement seems to be reflected in the opinions of the participants, as they also think it is very important for NSEs to adjust their language use to NNSEs.

The ways in which the participants say they adjust their language use are similar to the ones Rozina claims NSEs should pay attention to when communicating with NNSEs and to suggestions made by NSEs in research by Rogerson-Revell: avoiding unfinished sentences, avoiding long, complex sentences, use of idiom and colloquialisms, slowing down the rate of speech, adding repetition. Participants recalled other ways in which they adjust their language use to NNSEs which were not mentioned by Rozina or Rogerson-Revell, such as trying to speak without an accent, enunciating clearly, listening actively to their conversational partners and using non-verbal communication. The suggestions of the participants, as well as the ways of accommodating stated by Rozina and Rogerson-Revell, can be used for the design of a training model for NSEs in which they are taught how to adjust their language use to NNSEs. Moreover, the participants gave suggestions on what should be included in the proposed training for them to get more enthusiastic about participating in

one. They said that such training should go beyond the level of “speaking very loud to the foreigner” and should give a deeper insight into the NSE – NNSE paradigm. They also said that such training for NSEs should be presented in the form of workshops. Some participants said to find it useful if NNSEs are also included in the training or workshop, because then both parties could learn from each other. Furthermore, they suggested that international companies would be suited as a target group for the proposed training and that the proposed training or workshop would work best in a company where people with few different cultures work. They believe that if the proposed training focuses on many different cultures and languages, it will stay superficial because there will be no room to deal with topics in detail. As an alternative, they propose training for NSEs which focuses on the language of the country the expats are working in. In this way, training could go into detail and would be more relevant for NSEs, as they could use what they have learned in practice. It was also mentioned that training would mostly be helpful for people who work in an international environment and who do not have much international experience, as they are afraid such training would be “common-sense stuff” for someone who has been working internationally over a long period of time. The participants made other suggestions that could be implemented in training, such as how to give a presentation for NNSEs and how to draft documents for a NNSE target group.

One participant made the comment that he would be interested to learn about the different ways of communication in different countries, because he has noticed that he has to communicate completely differently with people in Holland than with people in Africa or the Middle-East. Charles and Kankaanranta and Louhiosa-Salminen state that communication skills are important in business, perhaps even more than language skills. The participants also seem to think communication skills are important, as they addressed this topic at multiple occasions in the interviews. Therefore, it is advised that training for NSEs also focuses on communication skills and cultural differences.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 General Conclusion

Currently, English is the world's most influential lingua franca. The use of English has risen dramatically over the last couple of decades. One area where the use of the English language has experienced an exponential increase is in the field of business. According to recent estimates, 90% of English speakers are non-native speakers of English (NNSEs) and more business is done between NNSEs than between native speakers of English (NSEs), which means that NSEs are becoming outnumbered by NNSEs (Charles 263). Because the use of English has risen extensively over the last decades, a new concept for the use of English in business was introduced: business English as a lingua franca (BELF). BELF is the framework in which NNSEs do business with one another, while using English as a lingua franca to communicate. BELF is not just restricted to NNSEs, as NSEs often work together with NNSEs in international contexts. They are also confronted with BELF and thus with different forms of non-native English. Research shows that NNSEs often have more trouble communicating with NSEs than with fellow NNESs in business contexts (Kankaanranta et al.; Charles), which can be ascribed to the fact that NNSEs use a simpler form of English compared to NSEs and to the fact that NSEs are much quicker in speaking and thinking in English than NNSEs. As communication problems have a detrimental effect on business, they should be avoided as much as possible. Charles and Marschan-Piekkari recommend in the conclusion of their research that NSEs should be involved in training, in which they are taught how they can adjust their language use to NNSEs. Introducing such training for NSEs could improve internal and external communication in an organisation, which is ultimately beneficial for companies. However, before such a training model can be implemented, the attitudes of NSEs towards participating in such a training should be examined. NSEs could be of the opinion that it is the responsibility of NNSEs to learn English sufficiently. Furthermore, they could think possessively of English, as they are the native speakers of the language.

The current research aimed to find out more about the attitudes of NSEs towards training models, in which they would be taught how to adjust their language use to NNSEs. Moreover, it aimed at eliciting more information which could be used for an eventual realisation of such training in the future. To find out more about the opinions of NSEs regarding the proposed training programme, eight NSEs who work and live in the Netherlands, were interviewed. They had to answer questions about topics such as accommodation to NNSEs, communication problems on the work floor, foreign language ability, ownership of English and willingness to participate in the proposed training model.

From the discussion of the interviews and the analysis of the results, it is apparent that the NSEs that were interviewed already accommodate their way of speaking to NNSEs. Moreover, they are lenient towards mistakes that NNSEs might make and they are sensitive about correcting NNSEs' mistakes. The participants think that both NSEs and NNSEs carry responsibility in ensuring successful communication on the work floor. Therefore, they think it is important for NSEs to accommodate to NNSEs as well, as NNSEs already make an effort by learning the English language. The majority of the participants is willing to participate in the proposed training and none of the participants would refuse to participate. However, some of them do wonder whether the proposed training would be challenging enough and would teach them something new, as most of the participants are already used to accommodating to NNSEs in such a way that it comes naturally to them. For some of the participants, having to accommodate to NNSEs on a daily basis has even had such an influence on their way of speaking that their natural way of speaking has changed altogether. Nevertheless, they think that the proposed training model could be very well suited for NSEs who have just started working in an international context.

Furthermore, the participants proposed that training could be given in the form of a workshop, where ideally NNSEs and NSEs work together so that they can benefit from each other. They also suggested that the proposed training model should focus on the languages of the country of residence of the NSEs, or on the corporate languages, to ensure that there is room to discuss them

in detail. The other ways in which the participants adjust their language use to NNSEs, such as trying to speak without an accent, enunciating clearly, listening actively to their conversational partners and using non-verbal communication, can also be adopted in future training models, next to the ways of accommodating stated by Rozina and Rogerson-Revell. Even though the current research has focused solely on language issues between NSEs and NNSEs, the results of the interviews have shown that communication skills are also essential in business communication. Therefore, training for NSEs in which they are taught to accommodate to NNSEs should also teach NSEs about communication skills. Preferably, training for NSEs should also focus on intercultural communication skills or cultural differences, as NSEs have to work with NNSEs from different cultures and ways of communication can differ significantly between cultures.

Finally, it has to be mentioned that the current researcher does not want to convince people that NSEs are the main cause of communication problems in international business. It is a fact that NNSEs also cause communication problems and that for NSEs it is not always clear what they want to say, because of their accent or because of their (lower) proficiency in English. However, currently NNSEs outnumber NSEs so drastically that it is important that NSEs also start accommodating to NNSEs.

5.2 Limitations of the Current Research

The scope of the current research is quite small, as only eight NSEs have been interviewed. Therefore, the results of this research cannot be used to make generalisations about a larger group of NSEs. There is also the possibility that the answers of the NSEs that were interviewed are not entirely genuine: the participants might want to give socially desirable answers or they might not want to offend the current researcher, who is also a NNSEs. Furthermore, the current research does not take the view of NNSEs into consideration, as only NSEs were interviewed. As stated before, if NNSEs had also been interviewed, more information concerning communication between NNSEs and NSEs might have been collected. Moreover, the current researcher had no previous experience

with ethnographic interviews, which means the interviews could have been conducted more professionally. A professional interviewer might have asked different questions, or might have pursued certain arguments further. Besides this, the current researcher was limited by the fact that she conducted the interviews in English, which is not her native language. Finally, all the NSEs that have been interviewed were based in the Netherlands, which gives a limited view on the topic of communication on the work floor, because NNSEs in the Dutch business context generally have a high proficiency of English.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Research

For further research, it is recommended that more NSEs should be interviewed. Moreover, the opinions and experiences of NSEs working and living in other countries in Europe should be collected as well, to get a more complete view of communication problems between NNSEs and NSEs in the international business context. The view of NNSEs should also be taken into consideration by including them in further research. The recommendations of the participants concerning the proposed language training could be used to develop an actual training model. Furthermore, future training should also teach NSEs about communication skills and cultural differences, as they have proven to be significant factors in international business communication. Training models should eventually be implemented on a small scale to see if they could indeed be beneficial for companies.

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Appendix A: the interviews

Interview 1: participant 1 (21-05-2011)

Age: 29

Country of birth: Peru

First language: English and Spanish

Culture: England/Peru

Time working here: 1 year and a half

- First of all, do you use a specific variety of English when you're at work?

Not really, no I don't think so. I speak the way I normally speak.

- And how often do you have to communicate with non-native speakers of English when you're at work?

All the time.

- Could you tell me which nationalities the people you work with the most have? When you're in the Netherlands?

French, Francophone Africa, so all the French speaking countries in Africa such as Cameroonians, what else? Do Dutch people count?

- Yes, sure, all nationalities that aren't native speakers of English.

Ok because we're half/half very international and the other half is Dutch so yeah. So for me it is like speaking to a foreigner when I'm speaking to a Dutch person.

- So it's basically half/half, half Dutch, half French speaking?

Well it's half international, in general, yeah there is a lot of Spanish speakers and other you know. But I would say mainly French speakers.

- And do you often come in contact with native speakers of English?

Not so often. Let me go back to the first thing cause that is just for work right?

- Yes, because in my thesis I'll just be focussing on Business English. So do you ever come across communication problems when you're at work and is that more often with native or non-native speakers of English? And could you perhaps also give an example?

Does it have to be spoken or written? Because I also write to non-native speakers. *Yeah well that's ok in principle but I do want to focus more on the spoken problems.* Ok, I won't say so much problems but so I have to change the way I speak to non-natives. I'll speak a little bit slower. Problems in the business environment have only come through written communication. Ok I'll explain it to you a little bit; I work also in a work environment where I come in touch with French speakers. But the thing is I speak French fluently as well so sometimes I'm only speaking to them in English when there's other English speakers around. I haven't come, there hasn't usually been a problem and then with my actual work when we work with business language, I come in contact with a lot of Dutch people. But for me there have not been any problems because they've all been very fluent in English. So I don't think I've ever experienced, well there probably have been a few minor, where I have to repeat what I'm saying or use a different word because perhaps I thought sometimes a person speaks English so well, a English speaker forgets that they're a foreign speaker. You see what I mean? So because you forget you might get carried away and start using words that may be too advanced or too complicated you know? So I have to bring it down a little bit but usually I have no problems.

- Would you say most Dutch people you work with are very fluent in English?

Yeah I do think I find that. Well maybe I've met two or three that are less fluent but you can realise that very, very quickly. And most problems I have come across in the business communication have come from the written format. Because I think that it is even more difficult to explain in an email, where it is more difficult to get across what you want to say. I find that for a fluent person, now let's talk about a fluent French person, they're fluent in English and when I speak to them it's fine because in a lot of the times they can engage in my reaction and my expressions and my body language. But writing to them in a more formal way or in a business way because they can't read the body language or the expression, I find that it cuts a lot of the communication for them. Maybe for simple things it's

much easier cause you can write a few lines, but in written form there is much difference in the way French people write and English people write, so what I might write would seem too formal for them in that occasion. There's much more intricacies when it comes to writing I think, you have to be careful with the way you write.

- Have you ever been directly addressed by a non-native speaker that he or she could not understand what you were saying?

In a business environment? *Yes.* Well I think there has. *Could you say on which account a non-native speaker would have trouble understanding you?* Well I would say vocabulary yeah or if a sentence structure is very complicated and it contains for example two or three different tenses. Or especially I find that, it depends who you're speaking to. For example, I've found for francophone Africans that it is very difficult for them to understand the 'would have' or 'have had' tense. So you just have got to cut it down, simple it down.

- And when a non-native speaker doesn't directly tell you when he or she does not understand, do you notice that?

All the time.

- Could you give me an example how?

Once you come in contact with a lot of people who do not have English as a native language, I can tell directly, because if you can read a little bit of body language it's quite simple. You automatically seek approval for everything you are trying to say. You will see if he's nodding or if that person might be smiling, just paying attention. If they stop doing that there is something wrong.

- Is that something you have picked up from your work or somewhere else?

Just travelling a lot, business travel, leisure travel you know.

- So it is something you consciously pay attention to then?

Yeah definitely, all the time. I think it depends on whether I speak to a non-native speaker who seems to be completely fluent in English, again like some Dutch people that I meet. Then you switch off. Then I don't pay much attention to it consciously. But as soon as I realise that person might have some problems, then I switch it back on.

- Do you think other native speakers do this as well?

I think that it is a skill that you learn. I don't think you're born with it, everyone can learn it. But it is only through experience and I think that it is far easier if you speak another language. If you speak two or three languages then you can understand what learning a language means and how much attention you have to pay. So I think it helps you understand someone that doesn't speak your language. The stereotypical thing about England, as you might know, is that you don't get many people that speak a foreign language. I would find it, let's say it's quite likely that a lot of English people, when they go abroad, don't know how to express themselves to a non-native speaker. They might think that it's simpler to speak slower and louder when this is not necessarily the case. You can speak slower but you also have to use simpler words.

- So for a general British person it would be more difficult to adapt to a non-native speaker of English than for you would you say?

Yeah, but for me not because I'm born different but just because I have gained that experience. I think as soon as you start learning another language, it definitely helps. That's one of the things I have noticed here in Holland that a lot of people are bilingual and they express themselves very clearly. Even when they come across someone who speaks French then they will speak French. It's much simpler for them to understand each other than, for example, for a British person who's never spoken French to speak to a French person.

- Do you think it helps you that you are a bilingual?

Yes well not just for bilinguals. If I had been born in England, not bilingual, and lived there for twenty years, and then moved to France and learnt French I think that also would have helped me understand how a German person might feel when I'm communicating with him, do you see what I mean? So I think just learning a second language helps someone to understand them.

- Well I think then I should have defined "native speaker of English" before planning the interviews.

Well let's just say for example right, if you were to interview only monolingual speakers of English you're not going to get a good picture of what's it going to be like. Because they might think that they are good at accommodating to non-native speakers but there probably not. You need the outside view as well.

- Yeah you're probably right. Well let's talk about your role as a native speaker of English at work. Where do you think the responsibility lies when it comes to communication problems?

I look at it always as the responsibility of the person who speaks English to try and improve his communication rather than, because the other speaker is speaking in a language that is not his native language. I think it's only normal that the responsibility lies with the native speaker to try and improve the communication between the two people.

- And do you think most native speakers of English share your ideas? Have you ever come across any native-speaker colleagues for example who thinks different about this subject?

At work? Probably not at work let me see. Probably not at work but I do in everyday life.

- Is that because you don't often work with native speakers of English?

Well I have a few that are conscious that they are in a foreign country and they should do their best when it comes to communication. So it's not always the case that you meet a little bit of ignorant people, I mean you do get them but it's normally more on holiday. In business contexts I've met a lot of professional people that are conscious about it.

- Could you maybe tell me a bit more about English used in the business context?

Well something that I've found quite interesting is that at a high level of business, for example a conference, and I am talking from experience what I expect. In general, I adapt and I'm quite good at talking to people whose first language is not English right? But at high level conferences or business meetings, I expect people to talk better English. I expect them to be good at English. Because, especially in an international atmosphere, even if they're all Dutch or French, and it's a high level conference I would expect it to be done in English. If it's an international thing and I would expect them to be good at it.

- So your expectations are much higher in a professional business context?

Yes, when I'm suited up and going to a conference, I expect them to be good at it you know.

- And then would you think it is the responsibility of the non-native speaker to talk English sufficiently?

Yes, then I would think it's their responsibility. I mean, you have different levels of business. For example, we recently got a new director in our organisation. Our organisation, like you know, is half/half and it's an organisation that does projects all over the world. And we just got a director who at his first meeting in the organisation started speaking Dutch. And then already you've got a lot of people in that place for who maybe Dutch is a second third language, or even like myself who don't speak it at all. So you feel almost offended by it. In a normal context I wouldn't be offended because I live in Holland and I should've learnt Dutch. But in that context we were upset because you should know we are an international company and have an international taskforce and therefore you should speak English. Also, his English is not very good, in fact we were surprised he got hired with his level of English when he's got to represent the organisation in Geneva, Cameroon, or whatever.

- Do you see this more often where the higher you get in an organisation the English does not necessarily get better?

Well yes, it's often the case.

- Have you ever had work-initiated language training?

No I don't think so. Well I got offered a French business language brush up training and here I was offered a Dutch course.

- So it was foreign language training then?

Yes.

- But not how to adapt your English to non-native speakers?

No I never have, but I think it is a good idea though.

- Do you think you would participate in such a training, where you would learn how to accommodate your speech to make it more understandable to non-native speakers?

I would find that interesting, yeah. I do think that the company should specify why they think that training is required for that particular job. For myself, it would be interesting because I travel quite a bit and the way I communicate with someone in Holland is completely different from the way I communicate with someone in Africa or the Middle-East or something. That would be interesting. I would be afraid that it would start to simple, you know what I mean? I think I am already ok at it and I am interested at it but I would be afraid it would be common sense stuff: how you socialise with

someone, how you interact with someone. Perhaps if it would go a little bit deeper I would be interested.

Scale importance of NSEs accommodating to NNSEs: 5 (very important)

Scale willingness to participate in training: 3

Scale NSEs responsible in communication: 3 (half 2.5)

Scale NSEs already accommodating: 3 (US 1)

Interview 2: participant 2 (30-5-2011)

Age: 27

Country of birth: South-Africa, Durban

First language: English

Culture: India/African

Time working here: 2 years

- How often do you have to communicate with non-native speakers of English?

Within my working environment, everybody I work with.. must I give it to you in time or days per week? *You could try and give it in percentages maybe?* I would say 95% of my communication is with non-native speakers because for most of the week I'm based in the Hague, that's two times a week, and I work for the Southern-African chamber of commerce and there all my colleagues are Dutch. When I work for myself my colleagues are also Dutch, because I share an office with Dutch people and the only 5 per cent of the time I communicate with native speakers of English is when I Skype with my mother in South-Africa.

- Could you tell me which nationalities most of your colleagues have?

I mostly work with Dutch people, that is the whole 5 days a week I work with Dutch people. Most of my friends are very international and they come from countries like Spain, Italy just basically from non-Dutch countries.

- Do you use a specific variety of English at work?

I speak the same English I speak to, the same English I speak to my mother.

- Do you ever come across any communication problems at work when you're working with non-native colleagues?

I would say no because I've been working at the Southern African Chamber of Commerce now for over a year and my work is primarily in marketing and when I'm communicating with my colleagues

or with people outside the organisation, I think I speak in a very simple way that is very easy to understand and I haven't really received questions like "could you say this in a different way?"

- So you have never been directly addressed by a non-native speaker of English that he or she could not understand what you were saying?

No, in an entire year of working here I would say that someone would have maybe have asked me to explain something because maybe it was too technical. Yes I would say three times in a year? I think because the English that I grew up with speaking in South-Africa, it is not really American English, I think it is more British English and I think the Dutch people can understand it pretty well.

- Could you maybe give an example of a communication break-down at work that you did experience?

Yes, I can give an example. Let's say maybe my manager is explaining something to me. Something, but maybe if he talks very quickly, like if he's in a rush to go somewhere, then I ask him again just so he can reiterate. I ask him "could you repeat that again" and then he repeats it and then sort of I can get more of a understanding when he repeats it the second time. So that's like sort of an example of a communication breakdown.

- He's Dutch?

Yes he's Dutch.

- And why is it you can't understand him, because he talks very fast for example?

That's quite a good question. I think that he tries to directly translate what he was trying to say to me from Dutch to English so to me in English, it didn't make sense.

- Do you consciously make changes in your speech when you talk to no-native speakers?

My colleagues at work, I don't adjust my way of speaking because they're all pretty intelligent and they all have to deal with English speakers because we have an office in South-Africa and most of the colleagues there are English speaking. So they are kind of used to speaking to English native speakers. But sometimes, like if I see that for example, if I talk to someone from Spain or Finland and I can see that they really don't have a good grasp of the English language, then I just repeat myself or I talk slowly. So then they can really, yeah I use a lot of hand actions so they understand me.

- So you also use non-verbal communication?

Yes, non-verbal communication. If I can see that someone has very poor English I start to use non-verbal communication as well.

- Ok, and what about written communication? Do you think that is more or less difficult than spoken communication with non-native speakers?

I think that if I'm communicating with a non-native speaker, for example, if it is one of my colleagues, sometimes what I do is, so they can have a full understanding of what I am trying to communicate, I try to expand what I am saying. So sometimes if the sentence will take me just five words, I will expand it maybe into ten so I know that they will really understand what I am saying. It's not usually that I have to do that, I think I know when I have to do that with so I would say fifty per cent of the time I will expand my communication in emails and fifty per cent of the time not because I know they will understand me.

- And who do you think has the responsibility to make communication run smooth?

Yes I think that it's, the role to make communication run smooth is on my part with fifty per cent and I feel the other fifty per cent lies on the part of the people I'm communicating with. I think that if it's an international company and they know that, for example Shell, if they know that they will regularly have non-native Dutch speakers working for them then I think it's nice that the staff will also get trained, being the Dutch speakers and also the non-Dutch speakers. So that they will now know how to communicate best together

- Have you ever been in a communication where it was not fifty/fifty?

No I would say not because I've seen in Holland that when you're trying to communicate with people they want to understand you and they really make an effort to understand you. I think that, what I particularly like about Dutch people is that when they don't understand you, they will ask you again until they really do understand you. So I think the Dutch way of asking questions definitely helps with people understanding each other more. And I don't think that exists in other cultures, just really asking questions. Ja, well not really in Southern-Africa, my culture really, if it's a business dealing and people don't really understand each other they don't really make too much of an effort to ask questions to understand. They just leave it.

- So have you ever had any language or communication training that was work-initiated?

No, I have not.

- Would it be something you would be willing to participate in?

I would definitely want to participate in it. Because I think that for someone working in an international environment, it is definitely necessary for me to learn, well it's also because I am in marketing and communication so. I want to learn how to best communicate to people and how to better make myself understood. But I would definitely like it to be something like, for example if I'm in the marketing team, and if I'm the non-native speaker and I have native speakers with me, then I would like us all to sort of be in this team building, how to communicate better, sort of workshop. Because as I said, I believe it is fifty/fifty.

- When you say fifty/fifty, do you think this is an idea shared by native speakers in general? And do you think speaking a second language helps you in any way?

Well, to answer the question on two levels, my second language in South-Africa is Zuid-Afrikaans, so I, actually I've taken up the Dutch language very quickly so maybe that's also something that's made me feel very comfortable communicating with Dutch people. But I do have friends from America and an acquaintance from Britain, also living here in the Netherlands. And if I have to look at my American friend, he is working in an international company in Amsterdam, I feel that he sort of, he's from the first circle of English, I sort of feel that he's gone for Dutch classes and he tries to learn the Dutch language, but to make the cross-over from being so English to being able to speak Dutch is very difficult for him. I think he's been here for almost four or five years now and he still cannot make the cross-over to speaking the Dutch language. So he really only speaks English.

- But he is trying even though it's hard. There is this stereotype about Americans and the British as well, because they tend not to speak a foreign language, that when they go abroad their idea of adjustment is to just talk louder and slower, which of course is not really adjusting.

Well, I was sitting around the table, just two or three weeks ago with two people from Britain, me from South Africa and two native Dutch people. And we were having an entire conversation in English. And in that sort of social setting I really didn't find me personally as an English speaker had to repeat myself and also looking at the British people they also didn't have to repeat themselves. But I think if I had to look at it in a work setting, I think I've definitely seen that for me personally, if the conversation goes to a very sort of technical level, then a native Dutch speaker who doesn't have a very high level of the English language, then he finds it very difficult to understand me. I have to

reiterate myself or explain it in a different way. So I have found that If a conversation becomes very technical, with business terms, then I do have to sort of re-explain something in a different way for a native-Dutch speaker to understand me. But they always ask so that makes it different.

- And is adjustment to non-native speakers something you do consciously or unconsciously?

I would say consciously, because I am consciously making the effort to make myself more understandable, especially when it is a technical conversation.

- So not all of your colleagues have a high level of English?

No not all of them. Sometimes a Dutch colleague will write an email back to me, and I understand that it is their second language, and email back to me in English and the level of English is so poor, I think "oh this is not so good", you know. But then I also understand that on the other end of the stick, if I have to write an email to them in Dutch, and they will think "no this is not such a good level of Dutch" as well.

- Do you feel the same way about fluency in English when someone has a higher position in the organisation? Do you expect better English the higher you go in an organisation, or not?

I definitely think so. For example, I am a project person now in marketing, project manager in marketing, but if was communicating with the director and the director was Dutch, then I really would expect him to communicate both verbally and written, I wouldn't say a high level, but I would expect him to not make any mistakes in his communication. Because, I think if you are a director, you would have such international exposure, that you would really fine-tune yourself into communicating in English quite ok.

Scale accommodate to NNSEs: 3 (depends on situation; some Dutch are really proficient so no adaptation is needed)

Scale willing: 5 (as long as its team building with non-natives)

Scale responsibility: 3 (2.5) (both parties are responsible)

Scale accommodating already: 5 (moderate level of English)

Interview 3: Participant 3 (1-06-2011)

Age: 34

Country of birth: Canada

First language: English

Culture: Canadian

Time working here: 11 years

- How often do you have to work with non-native speakers of English?

Every day.

- Could you also tell me what kind of nationalities those people you work with have?

It's mostly Dutch, and there's Venezuelan and we deal with Indian vendors, so I work with them quite a lot.

- And how often do you work with native speakers of English?

Not so much. We also have contact with the US so we deal with Americans, but the majority of my time I'm just really in the office in Holland dealing with non-native speakers.

- And do you use a specific variety of English when you're at work?

No, not particularly. I speak Canadian English, if you can label it like that. Well, over the time here my Canadian I guess has gotten a little bit less and has got influenced by, yeah British English. For example, different words for things or also my accent isn't as strong as for example when I hear my brother and sister speak.

- You say British English, is that because you work mostly with British people?

I guess that, I guess yeah, I guess that if I'm speaking English with native speakers they tend to be British. Just in my general, in my work environment just over the years. And also non-native

speakers, who I tend to interact with, have a more British English vocabulary rather than American English.

- Have you ever come across communication problems when you're at work and if so, more with native or non-native speakers of English?

I guess a specific example is always hard. I guess I usually feel that I'm clear, but I don't, sometimes the communication problem comes from the non-English speaker how they word things or say things. And I find in my experience that tends to be where the communication problems come from.

- So you more often have trouble understanding the non-native speaker than the other way around?

Yeah, that's generally what I feel. Of course they might say that I'm not being clear, but the way they explain things sometimes I just, yeah I don't really understand and we like have to go back like "ok, what did you really mean?". I'm trying to think of an example.

- Would you say that's more often based on grammatical mistakes or lexical mistakes or because of the accent?

Accent is usually not the problem. Especially in business, because everybody's English is usually at a certain level anyway. I think it comes more from writing, from e-mails. So the way they, maybe they, not always the grammar but the way it's structured the way the idea is translated and then written down in an e-mail. That's I think where I've seen more like communication issues, or thinking "well I think he means this".

- Do you find written communication more difficult than spoken communication when communicating with non-native speakers?

No, I find it the opposite. I find that, especially with business, social is different, but with business I find I prefer to have everything on e-mail. So that it's, so I can figure out what they mean or I can ask them to clarify but also my communication is, I can think about it and write it down in a way that I think is easy for them to understand. So I prefer e-mail. Especially with the Indians. *Yes?* Yeah, because their accent for me is very hard to understand. Sometimes on the phone it's like, "ok, yes, yes, yes, could you please write that in an e-mail? Ok, thank you". And then I get the e-mail and then I'm like: ok. Because sometimes I can't understand anything they say. Even if they're speaking English.

- Ok so you would say there's a difference between communicating with Indians and with the Dutch?

Yeah, oh definitely. Here accent isn't a problem, in Holland no.

- Have you ever been directly addressed by a non-native speaker of English when he/she couldn't understand what you were saying?

That they don't understand me? Yes. No, no, never. So I can't give you an example.

- Ok, have you ever noticed a non-native speaker of English not understanding what you were saying then, without him or her saying so?

I think in general, if I sort of think back. I guess you sort of, when you're speaking face-to-face, you can kind of take the non-verbal clues. If someone is a bit, if they get a bit of a blank look or they ask you a question that isn't quite relevant to what you were explaining, it's obvious that they didn't understand and you can sort of try it again. But I don't think, especially in the business environment, it hasn't happened that much. Because, especially in Holland, everybody who works in a business environment in a professional capacity, their English is definitely at a certain level.

- Is it different with the Indians you work with? Do they ever say they don't quite follow what you are saying?

No, they don't say "can you repeat that?", but I wonder if that's also cultural. Because in the relationship we have with them, we're the clients and they're the vendors and I think maybe culture comes into that they would not want to offend me by saying they don't understand me. I think that also plays into it as well. So for them, I don't know so much if they do understand me, because I don't see them and they don't tell me so yeah.

- If you do have a communication break-down why do you think this is?

Well, and I also think, it could also happen, sort of break down, if you don't listen well. If you speak with non-native speakers you really have to listen well, and also try not to fill things in for them. And then if you are maybe trying to fill things in, then it could lead to communication breakdowns. You know, if you make assumptions of what they're going to say but not really listen because it's difficult or you know you sort of fill it in and then, "oh yeah I know what you mean, I know what you mean". And then maybe they don't mean that, maybe they didn't get the chance to say that.

- Is this something you have experienced in person?

Well, most of my issues in communication are not in my work environment with non-native speakers. I have lots of examples from these sort of things in my personal life, like my life in Holland. But they're not work related, but miscommunications and if people understand me, like with my boyfriend parents. For example, if I switch to English and I say something, often I'm really sure they don't understand. But that's not at work.

- Why do you think you experience this more in your personal life and not at work?

I think because of the level of English of the people in my personal life and in my work environment. So my work environment, and over the whole eleven years that I've worked here, pretty much all the non-native English speakers have had really quite high levels of English. But then in my personal life in Holland, that's different, because my boyfriend's friends, yeah I mean they speak English but it's also a misconception that, I mean Holland is rated very high but it's also a misconception that everybody is fluent in English. And it also doesn't mean everyone is comfortable speaking English. Because a lot of Dutch people never speak English. It's just in certain circles. So a lot of my boyfriend's school friends they are very uncomfortable speaking English, so we speak Dutch. My Dutch isn't fluent either, which is also a different story, but yeah, they prefer to speak Dutch with me rather than English. And if I switch on to English, they understand, but you see that they'll keep responding in Dutch. Which is totally fine, but you really see a resistance or they are uncomfortable speaking English.

- So it's really a big difference from your business environment where you don't really come across that many communication problems?

Yeah in general, except with the Indians. But they're not in Holland so.

- Yes, but they are in fact a part of your business environment.

Yeah that's right. But I think then the default is always to, throughout my working life here, yeah the default that everybody always says, is when you are speaking on the phone with somebody. Because the phone is almost the worst way of communication because you don't, you're not face to face so you don't have the non-verbal clues, and you don't have the time to read an e-mail. It's immediate, but it's just a voice. So always the rule was, kind of the rule, if you don't understand what someone says on the phone, just ask them to send an e-mail. It's always kind of the default.

- Do you consciously make changes in your speech actions when you talk to non-native speakers of English in your work environment.

Well yes, not anymore that I notice it, but it's kind of been a gradual process over all the years that I've worked. Because basically I've always worked in international environments, so with non-native speakers, also native, but mostly non-native English. So living in Holland as well, and that also influences it, but over the years my speech has gotten really, yeah, my speech has gotten much slower, my vocabulary is kind of diminished. So, it has an impact a bit on my own language.

- So it is something you picked up on when you started working?

I think when I started working, you sort of have a sensitivity to it, so you speak slower and you don't choose the big words when you can use a simple word. That sort of thing. But if that's always the way you speak, that ends up becoming how you speak. And my family notices it. They're like, "you speak so slowly", and I'm like "you speak so fast"! And yeah, it's funny, yeah I've noticed that.

- Would you say you learning Dutch also helped you adjusting to non-native speakers?

Yeah, no, I think that in Canada we had a lot of French, so I had French when I came. But I've lost it now because I haven't spoken it in eleven years. But no, I think that being conscious or having learnt a second language is definitely helpful yeah. And also too in the way, you also a bit understand more, you know, if people speak and a sentence isn't, the verb is in the wrong place or you know it's not like, it doesn't affect how you think about the person: "oh gosh, they're stupid" you know?

- What do you think are things you could do for a non-native speaker to understand you better?

Using shorter sentences, not really advanced vocabulary . So keep it simple and speak slower.

- Is using colloquialisms something you have also outgrown or not?

Yeah, that's true. I really don't use them.

- When we're talking about where the responsibility lies when it comes to communication problems, who do you think has it, native or non-native?

I think then in general, if you're having the discussion in English, then it should be the responsibility of the native speaker. Because, the native speaker has got more resources available to them to dig

deeper and to try to get clarification. Whereas the non-native speaker might not know another word for something or may not yeah or to frame their thoughts in words. Yeah but I think then it is, yeah the native speaker should have the responsibility of digging deeper and getting clarification.

- Do you think this thought would be shared by other native speakers as well? For example, the stereotype or prejudice about Americans is that they are less open to learning foreign languages and such, so do you think an American (if you know any) would think the same way as you do?

I think it really depends on, well the situation, which it always does I guess. But I think it really depends on if they're just in a conference call with their Dutch colleagues and they're at the same level, discussing a business problem. Yeah, then I don't think they have any time for any language communication problems. They expect then the colleagues who are non-native, to speak English fluently.

- How do you notice this when you're in a meeting or such?

I think I notice because , also over the years you are often on conference calls with the US, because I've always worked for American companies, except now of course. So you often have colleagues in the US. Americans, they don't talk slower and they often are inconsiderate of the fact, like little things when they're in a conference room with five people and like you're in Holland with like two or three people also in a conference room, they just talk through each other so they make it difficult to understand them. I guess they don't really think about it. They don't really think that other people maybe have a little bit harder time understanding. They also, they also can be slightly patronising, because when I speak with them, or I have in the past they would say "oh boy 'NAME', your English is really good!". And I'm like "well I hope so, I'm from Canada". And they're like "Oooh, ok". They also have that kind of thing where they sort of want to congratulate people on their English.

- And if you've ever worked with British people often, do you notice any differences between the British and Americans when it comes to communication?

Maybe the British are not quite as condescending as the Americans in certain circumstances. Like a Brit would never say "Oh your English is good". But on the other hand I think they're also quite mono-cultural. And I also think they don't take a lot of consideration about their accents, how difficult it can be. Because even I have trouble understanding some British accents. And if they don't speak slowly then I can't understand them. And then I think what is my Dutch colleague doing and

he's looking at me and he's like "what is he saying?". So I also find that the British don't have a lot of sensitivity for it. At least what I've experienced in business.

- Did you ever had any language or communication training that was work-initiated?

No, never.

- And would you be willing to participate in a training where you would learn how to adjust the way you speak to non-native speakers of English to make yourself better understood?

Yeah, yeah sure, definitely yeah.

- So you would not find it odd to having to learn to adjust your native language to a non-native speaker of English?

Well, you know if you're trying to reach a goal in business, you know everyone is there for the company right? And communication is a key aspect. If you're at work, there's other kinds of training like time management training, or to make yourself more effective. So you could be a better employee. So communication is like that as well, so whether it's your own language or not, the common goal is to work better for the company. Yeah then I don't think it should be an issue that it's my language, because it's for the company's interest.

- Do you think such a training is necessary? That it's beneficial for native speakers working in the Netherlands?

I think it kind of depends. I think it's different when someone is living and working in Holland. Then they're living in Dutch society and they're getting a lot of influences from Dutch society so that they're automatically picking up these sort of things like speaking slower and so on. I think it could be really interesting for companies like Shell. Really big international companies that maybe have Americans coming here for say six months and they're being put in an apartment in the Hague and they're working or that kind of thing. People here that are on temporary basis but people that work in an international environment, who haven't worked in an international environment before; I think then it could be quite useful yeah.

Scale importance of NSEs accommodating to NNSEs: 3

Scale willingness to participate in proposed language training: 5

Scale NSEs responsibility in communication: 3

Scale NSEs accommodate enough to NNSEs: 3

Interview 4: participant 4 (3-6-2011)

Age: 31

Country of birth: Canada

First language: English

Culture: Canadian (but only if he had to choose)

Time working here: 3 years

- When you're at work, do you use a specific variety of English?

No, it's like a mix, because coming from Canada, we're a mix between British style English and American style English. We write the way the British would write, so 'colour'. We're definitely closer to British English when we're writing, but speaking tends to be maybe closer to American. Well, you know my English has turned to shit. You know, because like, living here.. because I speak, I speak English all day with people that don't speak English as a native language. So I ended up kind of adopting their way of saying things. When I went back home, I studied here for two years so as a student, I was too poor to go back home for Christmas or something. So it was the first time I went home was after two and a half years. And then, the first thing, when I was on the flight back, as soon as I got there, someone said if I liked some nuts or something, and I couldn't understand what she was saying. She was talking too fast for me. And I'm like "I don't know what she's saying to me".

- How often do you have to communicate with non-native speakers at work?

In the office? 99.9 per cent of the time. However, we have, we're broken up into teams, that depends on where our clients are from, and I'm on the team that deals with North-American clients. So very often on the phone, I will talk to native English speakers from the US so, or write back and forth. Couple times a day at least. Face-to-face never. Once a month when they come to Amsterdam, the client, for a face-to-face meeting and that's it. The other times it's only by phone or by e-mail, when I talk to native English speaking people. And that's only after like, three o'clock in the afternoon or two in the afternoon. Depends on how early they go to the office in the US. And I work until seven, so basically from two till seven is the only time I'll have telephone conversations with native speakers. During the day they have their European offices, who I have contact with.

- So what nationalities have the people you work with at the office?

Dutch, Chinese, Japanese, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and Greek. I think that's all the cultures we have at my company. Swedish. One Swede.

- And they all communicate in English?

Yeah. Every person that I mentioned, with exception of the Canadian and one Chinese girl, have all been living here long enough that they speak Dutch.

- So you communicate with them in English and they talk Dutch amongst themselves?

Yeah, mostly 80 per cent of them will speak to each other in Dutch. Because they've been living here longer than I have, or as long but picked up the language faster. Oh and there's also a girl from, what's that country just north from Romania? Moldova. Yeah, we just hired a girl from Moldova. Yeah, she doesn't speak Dutch, so English with her.

- In any case, *you* speak English to everybody else?

Yeah. Except when I *try* to speak to them in Dutch. For example, "wil je iets drinken?", things like that. Just simple stuff. But if it has to do with business, then it'll be in English, to be efficient.

- Do you ever come across communication problems at work, with native or non-native speakers of English, and could you perhaps give an example?

Never with native speakers. I always, and quite often, come across communication problems and it's always with non-native speakers.

- How is the level of English at you company then?

It's quite high. But I mean, one word can change the meaning of a whole sentence right? So, or past and present tense, or "was it done", "is it done", or "when is it done", "has it been done". The subtleties within that, if I say "yes", when I thought "will it be done" meant "is it done", you know there can be some confusion there.

- So you would say the communication problems are mostly based on grammar then?

With Dutch people, yes. And if you start asking about someone from more of a different culture like China, then, or even Turkey, then it could turn into a lot more cultural misunderstandings. For

example, we had a Turkish girl who used to work for us, and another.. us talking to her about another colleague, and then the colleague enters the room. Now, there's a English saying "speak of the devil" right? When you're talking about the person and then they come in. Well, this Turkish girl got really offended by me saying that. "Speak of the devil? How rude of you! Why would you say that about that person, that's so mean" or something like that right? And I am shocked, because I have no idea what she's talking about. So after some discussion with her, it turns out that, well in Turkey, they have the saying like "say an angels name she appears" and "speak of the devil" is more like when someone you don't like comes into the room. So even though we were both speaking English, the cultural reference around this concept was different. That was also her problem herself, she has a personal problem not being able to adapt to the Western culture so she ended up quitting eventually. But in this situation it was completely misunderstood. The same with someone Chinese, Chinese person we work with. I mean they have some different cultural ways to work and talk to people etcetera. Not so direct and more formal etcetera. Sometimes they have a hard time fitting into the Dutch culture. I don't have so much of a problem because I find Dutch and Canadian culture quite similar. Especially with formalities and protocol etcetera.

- Have you ever been directly addressed by a non-native speaker of English at work, that he or she could not understand you?

Most likely that has happened before. I can't think of a specific example.

- Can you remember what the cause of these communication problems were then?

A lot of the times it can be, if I like say something too fast right away. Or if I say it in a way using maybe words like, uncommon words. I don't want to say like bigger words, but maybe just words they haven't heard before. So they're like "what does that mean?". Or if I use a phrase maybe. Like I said earlier about Dutch phrases, like "did you fall down the stairs?". If I say something like that in English it may not always be understood. But that's the only reason though, only because I say it too fast or if it's something they don't understand or I would pronounce a word differently from what they would expect me to say it, or how they would pronounce it themselves. Other than that, its usually quite good communication. Especially when you're talking, because you can easily correct it and can see understanding really fast. E-mail is another story because you write an e-mail and maybe it's not, the meaning is not 100 per cent clear and you can have back and forth e-mails before you get to the understanding. This can be either over hours, minutes, or even days, depending on how frequent you e-mail or whether the person is in the office. You can clear something up pretty quickly when you're talking face-to-face, but over e-mail it's often not so good.

- That's quite interesting.

Yeah, especially with e-mail becoming a bigger a bigger part of our lives, you know. It can be quite frustrating for me, sometimes at work we'll have a string of e-mails back and forth trying to figure something out when it can be cleared up in a two-minute phone call. Even with clients back and forth. And a lot of people that I work with, they may not want, they may be scared or nervous to talk to a client, especially an American client, over the phone just because of their language ability. So they prefer to use e-mail, but then you have the problem of going back and forth and misunderstanding when you could clear it up quicker in a phone call. But they're not confident enough to resolve it over the phone.

- Why do you think this is especially so with American clients?

Because their native speakers of English. So it creates.. I notice a lot like at my company that people who don't speak English as a native language, they'll have a lot more, they'll be way more confident talking to each other in broken English because they're both not perfect so they won't care making mistakes. You know, when they talk to me or someone else who is a native they're more self-conscious and aware of trying to be perfect. But I am the same way in Dutch too. If I say something in Dutch I will try hard to say it correctly. But I also think that it doesn't help them get better. For example, some people they'll like say "oh say whatever you want in Dutch, as long as we can understand you than that's fine". But to me, in my opinion that's not good because I'll develop bad habits that are harder to get rid of later. Whereas if you do it right from the beginning then yeah you'll be better in the end, but that's just my opinion.

- Do you correct your co-workers often?

Well, I don't like to correct peoples English. I don't know, where I come from it is considered rude or impolite to correct somebody, somebody's grammar when you talk to them. But everybody at my work is like "no, no , you have to correct me while I'm talking, you have to, you have to". I feel uncomfortable sometimes, but I try to do it every now and then when it's a glaring mistake, but the small things, I usually let it slide. But there's some things that really bother me, like "send". Nobody in my office can get that correct, "sent" or "send". That's only writing though, when you speak "d" and "t" sound the same, but every time they send an e-mail, almost 90 per cent of the time it's wrong.

- Do you notice when a non-native speaker of English doesn't understand what you are saying, without him or her telling you? And how?

They would just keep nodding. I can usually tell in their eyes and their facial expressions, when you've kind of lost them. Like their eyes will go to, like up and right or up and left. They're trying like, think about what they are saying, like "oh what is he saying?". Or where ever your eyes go when you're thinking.

- Would you say you pick that up quite well?

Yeah. Plus, the people I work with, if they don't understand they'll stop you right away.

- Where do you think you picked up on that, and is it something you do consciously?

No, I don't do it consciously. I've been here for five years now, but when I first moved here I would speak too fast to people and they wouldn't understand me and they would tell me to slow down etcetera. So I think it's something you just develop. It's really just experience. Certain people I work with I know, just by talking with them, what their level is. So I can talk faster or just use bigger words with one person than I can with another person. But I can only learn that from experience.

- And would you say that.. well you speak a foreign language, right?

Well, I studied French for over eight years and I've been studying Dutch for over two years now.

- Do you think learning a second language has an influence on you adjusting to non-native speakers of English? Because you know now what it's like not being able to express yourself fluently in another language etcetera.

Oh, yeah definitely. It's also something you only pick up on after practice. You start seeing the way they express their ideas so. You'll kind of adopt it.

- Is learning a foreign language in Canada mandatory?

Yeah, you'll get it in school for like, eight years. It's mandatory from the time you first start school, so like grade one, when you're like five or six years old. You'll have to take it until you start high school. And even in the first year of high school, you must take another language. But it no longer has to be French, it can be another language. You'll have to do it until you're about fourteen or fifteen. So I like

did it as long as I had to and when I went to grade nine I took German, just for a change, but German was really hard.

- Another person from Canada who I interview last week mentioned her whole way of speaking completely changed since she's lived here. You mentioned the same right?

Oh definitely. I've changed the way I speak so much so that when I go home, I don't sound, like right now I stutter and stumble on words and stuff. I like have to search for words to use, and it has never been like this before. And it gets worse every year. I can definitely notice when I meet, like yesterday for example, my friend is visiting us from the US and we took him out and showed him around. He noticed it right away. After so long, hanging out with him it becomes, I was talking really fast and he was talking really fast, so you kind of fall back into it after a while. But at first it's weird. Especially when I went back home and all my friends would say "you talk so slow" for example. I think it's because I don't hang out with native English speakers at all. My last roommate was from Bulgaria and he like studied English from high school and started speaking English very young. So his English is very advance but he has the same issues.

- How lenient are you towards non-native speakers of English's accents?

It doesn't bother me so much, I've been used to it by now.

- And in the beginning when you first arrived here?

It never has been such a bother to me. Sometimes I went like "what are you saying, what is that word?" and even right now: "oh you mean such blablabla". But it doesn't bother me that much. I have some small pet peeves. Like every Dutch person is like "I have no ID" instead of idea. Same with spelling as well, it's really funny when Dutch people try to spell, like "Gert-Jan". They'll say "G" instead of "J".

- What do you think you could do to make yourself better understandable to non-native speakers of English?

I speak slower and I enunciate more. I'll choose simple words and put them in like a normal sentence, kind of a simple English, not elaborating too much. I'll try to stick like two clauses in one sentence, maybe three.

- Have you ever had any work-initiated language training where you were taught how to adjust your use of English to non-native speakers?

For English, no. Everybody else does, except for me because I'm a native English speaker. We have a British guy that runs his own company, who specifically focuses on Dutch people speaking English. He's a British guy but he's fluent in Dutch. He goes to companies to learn Dutch people how to speak better English, because he knows the mistakes Dutch people make regularly. So he comes to our company once a week and takes a group of 10 to 15 people and works with them for like ten weeks and then he takes another group and works with them for ten weeks. He's been doing that for the last few years now. He has his own training method. And that's required, for every non-native speaker of English. I take the Dutch lessons.

- Do you think such a training would be something native speakers of English, such as yourself, would be open to participating in?

Well, I think it would work best if you have a company with a few cultures. In very multicultural organisations, like ING, I'm pretty sure they already have these things.

- You don't think native speakers of English would have any negative feelings towards such a training?

Well, yeah, maybe I would be a bit annoyed. If my company said I would have to take, well it wouldn't bother me actually, no. Depends on what the course is trying to tell me to do. If it's like speak slower, simpler, dummy yourself down for everybody else, I would basically say "well I already do that, I don't need you to train me in it and tell me how to do that", because I've learnt it from experience already. If you had maybe native versus Dutch, then you would know exactly where their strengths and weaknesses in the language lie and you could really focus on that. If you have a bunch of languages, then it is superficial and you'll never get that deep into it. If you would have for example a company with half native English speakers and half people that speak another language than you could really get into it. For example, I take Dutch lessons with the same teacher who gives Dutch people English lessons, so essentially they're learning the same as that I'm learning only from the opposite view. So I learn the problems the Dutch have with English. Like, Dutch people tend to always use the present tense right? For example "I've lived here for five years" the Dutch wouldn't say "ik heb hier vijf jaar gewoond" but "ik woon hier al vijf jaar" otherwise you don't live here anymore. So I try to make it harder than it is when I go from English to Dutch, because I think English is more complex.

- When it comes to other native speakers of English, like Americans or Brits, do you think they would be more opposed to participate in such a training?

Maybe. Because usually when you're in an international company the default language is English right? So I can understand why in the mind of somebody from Canada, the UK or the US they would think "they should be able to come to my level, to me, I shouldn't have to dummy myself down". I can understand why they may think that. Usually the problems don't lie with the native English speakers. Like I said, from experience it happens naturally, maybe, even if you take the rudest person you can find, who's like "screw that, I'm not budging", they will out of frustration eventually just give up and do it anyway. I think it's more being forced upon somebody that would make them negative towards the idea. I think that would maybe more be the problem, because like I said, you naturally do it anyway.

Scale importance of NSEs accommodating: 5

Scale willingness to participate in language training: 4

Scale responsibility of NSEs in communication: 2.5 (middle)

Scale NSEs already accommodating to NNSEs: 4

Interview 5: participant 5 (8-6-2011)

Age: 40

Country of birth: Indiana, US

First language: English

Culture: US

Time working here: 6 years (ICTY)

- How often do you have to communicate with non-native speakers of English when you're at work?

Daily. I would say 80% non-native, 20% per cent native.

- Which different nationalities do your co-workers have?

Right, the thing is I'm working in the United Nations, so I could probably list like twenty countries. Yeah, Dutch, German, Italian, Spanish, Macedonian, Serbian.

- Do you use a specific variety of English at work?

Yes, when we're drafting for example, or do you mean just spoken? *Spoken English yes*. I would describe it as Standard English, what you might hear when you listen to the nightly news or watching CNN. I try not to speak with too much of an accent because where I come from there can be heavy southern accents. And I try not to use too many slang terms that non-native speakers do not understand.

- You said just now that you make a distinction between written and spoken English. Why is that?

Because at work, written English for formal documents is British English as far as spelling is concerned.

- So when you write you use British English and when you speak you use American English?

Right, or if I'm doing more informal things like e-mailing to colleagues or something like that it's American spelling, but if I'm drafting a judgment or a decision for example it's British spelling.

- And when you're at work, do you ever come across communication problems with non-native speakers of English? And more often with non-native or native speakers of English?

All the time, daily. It's definitely more often with non-native speakers.

- Could you perhaps give me some examples of such communication problems?

I would say, I think the most typical would be, it would have to do with the rate of speech. Because I'm a native speaker, I tend to speak English quickly and non-native speakers, even if they're fluent in English, have a hard time understanding if I start talking too quickly. That would be one example.

- So you would say just your speech rate, and not so much grammar or lexical mistakes?

That would be the first thing if we talk about non-native speakers understanding me. If you're talking about other people and me understanding them, than it would be more like grammar. But usually, it's not like I can't understand someone, but I do notice a lot of mistakes things like that.

- Ok and what about written English, do communication problems also happen there?

Yeah, communication problems aren't so great with written English. In fact, they are fairly rare, because I think that if people have a hard time understanding they can look something up or they'll have the chance to maybe ask another colleague or something like that.

- Ok, so for you there aren't any problems when it comes to writing e-mails to non-native speakers?

No, no. I do have to keep in mind not to use slang terms. For example, if I were to say, the other day I was talking to someone from an embassy from, I think it was Montenegro, and I said something about touching base, as to say I'll follow up; "I'll touch base with you on that later", and he had no idea what "touching base" meant.

- So does it happen more often that you are addressed by a non-native speaker that he or she does not understand what you are saying?

Well, I would not say it happens often, but it has happened before in the past (I don't remember how many times). I had someone say, you know, "Can you slow down, I can't understand you", this is in the work context. I also, a lot of my friends here are from different countries, like I have one friend who's Italian, and when we go out drinking or something and we have had a few beers, I tend to speak with a bit of a slur and an accent and he's like "I can't understand what you're saying".

- But when you're working it doesn't happen very often?

No, it's not very often but it has happened where people have stopped and directly said, you know, "I can't understand because you're talking too quickly".

- And what about indirect contact? Would you say you'd notice if someone doesn't understand you without him or her directly telling you?

Yes, absolutely.

- And how would you notice that?

You can, you can kind of see if someone's eyes start squinting a little bit and maybe the head turns to the side a bit. Maybe these kind of non-verbal clues that people are not getting what you're saying.

- So you would say you do pay attention to it?

Yeah, absolutely.

- Where do you think you picked up on that? During your career or..?

Yeah, for sure. In fact, when I go back home for visits, people tell me that I sound completely different. Like I've lost my accent basically and I tend to articulate all of my letters and consonant. I think it has definitely changed, living here has definitely changed the way I speak English. Also, often when I meet people here they can't place me. Sometimes they think I'm British, which sounds a little crazy to me, but yeah, I don't have a British accent really. Other people mistake me as Canadian and sometimes people don't, you know, they got me pegged as an American, but they can't quite figure out what part of America I'm from.

- Would you say the level of English where you work, is high or moderate or..?

It's kind of hard for me to say because this is the first environment I've worked in with many non-native speakers. I would have to say it is high, because people have to speak in either English or French because that are the two official languages. And my French is horrible, so when I'm in contact with someone who speaks French I speak English to them. It's rare that I can't understand someone at all, so I would say it is high.

- You mention you're French is bad, how about other languages, do you speak a foreign language?

Well, it depends on what you mean by speak. I know a little Spanish, a little French, but I am nowhere close to fluency. The same with Dutch, you know I'm like really sort of first-year sort of stuff. I mean, I can cover all the important stuff, how to order food, drinks, and "where's this, what time does it open" and those sort of things. But it's not conversational.

- What about foreign languages in the US? Is it obligatory to learn a second language in the US, like it is here or is the situation very different?

I think it varies from state to state and I would say the trend is definitely to make it obligatory to start earlier. When I was going to school, it was obligatory in secondary school to pick a foreign language and you would study that for two years. And now I think it is more mandatory as you go into lower grades and primary school, people starting out that way. But then again, it kind of depends on the area of the US you're in. For example, if you like get into California, Southern California, or Arizona, New Mexico, I mean Spanish is so big down there that it's mandatory from grade 1.

- And your current job was your first international job abroad you said?

Yes, well I've travelled internationally before, just for vacations and then I had a few summer internships abroad. But this is my first moving abroad, living abroad permanently.

- Do you think it would affect your way of speaking to non-native speakers of English if you would have learnt another language?

Yeah, it affects it in, well I guess there's two things to say about that and if I'm not, but I mean one thing is that I wish I did speak a foreign language. Being a native speaker of English is kind of bitter sweet. I mean it's great because everyone seems to speak English, but it's also horrible because everybody speaks English and the best way to learn a foreign language is to have that motivation where you kind of have to learn it in order to kind of communicate with people. That's why, I mean

I've been here six years and my Dutch is horrible, because I don't need it for work, I don't need it for my social life. Even going out here in The Hague, everyone seems to, everybody's English is so, even if I wanted to learn Dutch, I'm kind of lazy when it comes to that stuff if I don't have to. But the other part of that is that I really wish I did speak some of these other languages. For example, if I'm with my friends who are all from different countries, you know, they're fluent in English, but you still don't get it. You're not really immersed in the other language, so even if we're all communicating in English, and I could speak Spanish or Macedonian as well, I could see a whole new side of that person.

- Has you moving and living abroad changed your view on non-native speakers of English? Have you become more lenient towards mistakes they make?

I think I've always been pretty lenient when it comes to that. You know, I've studied linguistics in university so I kind of approach it as, you know, the human language and as long as you're getting your meaning across, the formal rules of grammar don't matter so much. I tend to tease my friends here quite a bit, but if I try to speak Spanish or French they do the same to me. But I don't think it's, I don't think it has changed so much since I've been here, because I kind of. I mean it's one of those questions like, "am I here because of who I am" or "did being here made me who I am" sort of thing. I think that, you know, I came here because I was kind of an international personality anyway. I wanted to get out of America and experience Europa and that sort of thing so, I think it's pretty much been the same the whole time.

- What are your thoughts on responsibility of communication burden. Do you think it's more for the native, or the non-native speaker of English?

Well, in all due respect I think it depends on the situation. I would say I have more responsibility as kind of the carrier of the language. I mean it's my language so, if there's anyone who should make a correction or a suggestion or offer help, it should be me. But at the same time, the other person has to be willing to learn. Like, if I get the, I don't know, the French counterpart of the stupid American who is yelling at me in French and louder because I don't understand French you know, than that doesn't help the situation too much either. There's an interesting example I have with a judge I work with who's from Germany, who has really good English, until he gets upset. So when we're in a meeting and he's trying to battle these other judges, he wants me by his side because he loses his English. Like, he'll start to get red in the face and his English just disappears and he looks at me because I know what arguments he wants to make and then I'll, you've got to fill in the blanks.

- Do you think your thoughts on responsibility of English is shared by Americans in general? If you look at just your environment and experiences?

I think it's really hard to speak about Americans, I mean, just because it's such a diverse country and there are so many people from whether it's different income or there are people who immigrated from just five years ago who consider themselves as Americans. I think people perceive the issue as like, it depends on where you are. So, if you're someone in America, someone who has moved to America, you're expected to learn the language. Some people would tell you, they're assholes about it, "learn the language or get out". Other people will say things like, you know, "we'll help you on the language, here's classes and we'll teach you". Whereas, if you're going to France, I think most Americans realise that you can expect people over there to speak English so it's your responsibility, you're on their turf so it's your responsibility to learn their language or at least try.

- Did you ever have any language or communication training for your English, that was work-initiated?

No. I took French courses at work, but as far as English no.

- Would you be willing to participate in a training where you would learn to accommodate your English to non-native speakers?

Well, I mean yes, that's what interests me in doing this interview to begin with, because I'm kind of interested in language and different cultures and things and how people learn languages. So I think that if I saw a posting at work that was asking native speakers of English to attend a course for non-native speakers to add input or a course for native English speaker on how to better themselves in the context of non-native speakers, I think I would be interested in that. I think it's something I would participate in.

- Wouldn't you find it odd that you would then have to adjust your English while it's your native language?

I think that, especially in my job with the United Nations, I think that most people would be interested in that topic what native speakers of English could do to help non-native speakers to understand them. How they can change their, especially when it comes to work things like giving a presentation, or drafting something for example. Yeah I think people would be really interested in that but it's kind of a special environment as well you know.

Scale importance of NSEs accommodation to NNSEs: 5

Scale willingness to participate in language training: 4 (but it would have to be in work-time, then 5)

Scale NSEs responsibility in communication: 3 (middle)

Scale NSEs already accommodating enough: 3 (haven't met anyone who is not accommodating, but there's room for improvement).

Interview 6: participant 6 (08-06-2011)

Age: 38

Country of birth: England

First language: English/Italian

Culture: Italian/English (best of both)

Time working here: 6 years (ICTY)

- How often do you have to communicate with non-native speakers of English at work?

All the time. Most of my colleagues are from non-English speaking countries. I have Pilipino colleagues and their second language is English, but they're not at the level of native like Australian or American.

- What other kind of nationalities do you colleagues have?

Pilipino, Dutch, Belgian, Turkish, yeah, and one British and one Bulgarian.

- And when you're at work do you use a specific variety of English?

Well, I work in finance so we do use some terminology in financial, but nothing too complicated because, well it depends on which level you're working because when you're talking about reports then it gets more technical. But on a day to day basis no. We just use like acronyms very specific for our work and the ICTY. We use a lot of acronyms and abbreviations, like ICTY for example.

- And do you ever come across any communication problems when you're at work?

If so, non-native or native related?

Communication problems, I guess yeah. I think it's more to do with, because I work in payroll I get questions from staff members. I guess the communication problem is that they don't understand the things regarding salary and benefits. Not necessarily, they don't have to be non-native English because I also get native speakers of English and they don't understand something because it's more to do with our field and also to do with HR rules as well. So sometimes they don't understand what I

write, if that's what you mean. Sometimes I don't know if it's because they're non-native or if it's just that they don't understand the meaning of what I'm trying to tell them.

- So you're referring more to company or division related communication problems rather than language communication problems, does it not happen often?

Yeah there is sometimes. I think they misunderstand my English. That's for sure, because as well as some people speaking English. I know because I'm a language student, or an ex-language student. Sometimes you can understand it, but you don't know what the meaning behind the phrase is. I mean sometimes it's a cultural thing, the way you look at it from a different perspective.

- So you mean there's more to it than just language?

Yeah, for example someone's language is structured in a certain way and you know like, I know because I can compare Italian to English, for example. In Italian you sometimes write the opposite to English, for example. So you know, you can, so that's just a simple example. But sometimes the way you write it in one language, you can't do in another because it may sound rude you know. So there is definitely, although not all the time because most people have a high level of English. I think it's a requirement anyway for our organisation.

- So the people that work at ICTY generally have a high level of English?

Yes, yeah. Even so, there are some things that are, you know I sometimes come out with things like typical English sayings and they may not always understand them because you have to understand the culture as well.

- You said earlier that some of the people you work with sometimes have trouble understanding your English; to which aspect were you referring?

Well actually it's mainly writing, but sometimes it's difficult for me to like, understand what difficulty they're having because sometimes by writing I don't know. I'm trying to explain something that's work related, sometimes I rephrase it and I have to say it in an even more simpler English maybe, because maybe, for example, I may have used a word in English that they're not familiar with for example and of course you only need one word and you don't understand the sentence.

- So writing in English poses more communication problems for you than if you were talking to a non-native speaker face to face?

Well, in my case it's probably more that, also because I sometimes speak on the phone more than face-to-face. But I tend to, like when we're like doing something kind of official, especially if we have to deduct something from someone's wages, we tend to do it by e-mail. That's when they tend to have more problems. Occasionally it's happened by phone, but not as much.

- And have you ever been directly addressed by a non-native speaker of English when he or she had trouble understanding what you were saying?

I'll try to think. It may happen on the phone, I don't know. Because I said, maybe they'll come to our office. It could happen, but quite rarely.

- But more because of the fact that you don't have as much face to face contact with non-native speakers?

Not as much, unless if someone comes specifically to visit us. Because we're in three different buildings in our organisation, so not everyone can get to our office. But yeah, it has happened once.

- Do you still remember the nature of the problem?

Well, normally I don't think it was. It could be, I don't know. It could be related to maybe, to the way I speak, but I try to speak clearly. It most probably was work related. In this case I think it was someone who probably didn't know me.

- Would you say you notice if a non-native speaker of English does not understand you without him or her saying so?

Face-to-face I would yeah, I sometimes see the expression on their face but of course over the phone it's a bit more difficult.

- And how do you notice it on the phone?

Well maybe if they sound unsure, or their way of talking so then I can understand. Of course it's all related to what they're saying or what happens in the conversation. But of course it's much easier if you talk to someone face to face.

- And do you consciously make changes when you talk to a non-native speaker of English?

For sure, yes.

- Could you perhaps give me some examples of what you do?

Well I try to speak without an accent. I try not to come out with something that's typically English you know. Maybe they have learnt their English in America, you know. Sometimes even between native speakers of English there can be, for example I don't understand some American expression, so I can understand they wouldn't understand all of the British ones. So I try not to say those things. Of course it's different with my colleagues you know. If I come out with, well you get accustomed to your colleagues so it depends in which context. If it's someone I don't know very well I try to use Standard English.

- And is this your first experience abroad?

Well I worked in Italy. But I know Italy. But of course it was the first time I've worked abroad. It was the first time as an adult by myself, as previously it was by my parents. It's a different world when you're a child of course. And when I was a student I also lived in Argentina. That was completely different, although very similar to the Italian.

- So is this were you picked up on adjusting your language use to non-native speakers of English?

Well, actually in University in London, because most of my friends were actually non-English. Sometimes they were learning English, some of them, so I had to kind of talk with a really flat accent. And also you know, my mother's family is originally from near Manchester, so when I moved to London I kind of lost my accent.

- Do you think being a bilingual also helped you to adjust to non-native speakers of English, or to understand them better?

Well, yes I guess so. For example, if I say, when I visit. It's a bit difficult. I understand what you're saying but with me, like if I visited Italy as a child, I always spoke Italian with my cousins. My mother's sister is also married to an Italian and lives there so I have cousins that are like me, but they grew up in Italy. So I didn't really adjust my accent because they're used to use the accent from the north of England. And know they of course know both the languages and they understand also the culture. But with other people, like if I went to Italy I normally just speak Italian, unless someone asked me something in English. I would say I probably noticed it more, how to do it more when I went to London. Because before that, the town I come from is very small and there weren't many foreign people, so I didn't have to adjust. The only other things is, I could say, when I was a child we lived in

Belgium and I had to go to school in Belgium in the Flemish part, in fact I used to know Dutch. So maybe I adjusted a little bit when I was in Belgium but then I went back to England and like you know I didn't probably have to do, maybe on a subconscious level as a child.

- Would you say that learning foreign languages change your view on non-native speakers of English? For example when it comes judging mistakes they make?

Well, I think I've never done that. My mother at one point started teaching the course English as a foreign language. She talked about the way, when you do this course you have to learn about different people make different mistakes in English. Like Chinese people make this mistake and Italians another so. And it's also about linguistics, you know, so how that person moves the tongue around. So I was aware of it. I guess there's always maybe some ignorant people that make fun of that, yeah. But they shouldn't really. I was aware of that, so even before I started to learn a different language I realised that the way that I speak Spanish, I can also make mistakes.

- So you're quite lenient towards non-native speaker mistakes?

Yeah, I don't mind. I mean if, for example at work I'm a bit more reluctant to do it, but at university when I was with friends and they were learning English I would point out their mistakes and they would appreciate it because they would know where they made mistakes and they would ask me questions about "what this means, or that means". But of course, at work, I don't want to always say that because I guess it sounds like that they might feel undermined, you know.

- Have you ever had language training that was work initiated?

Let me think, work-initiated. I don't I have at the ICTY. I work for private companies as well so I'm trying to think. Actually maybe, I think it was more to do with interviewing skills. I don't think so, not that I can remember at the moment, not at work no.

- Would you be willing to participate in a training where you would learn how to accommodate their way of speaking to non-native speakers of English. So simple things like changing you speech rate, avoiding colloquialisms and such.

Well, yeah I think it's good. I mean I am probably more aware of it being an ex-language student, but especially in business someone who, let's say, has economics and they have to deal with people for example, or foreign subsidiaries, which is something that I have to do. I was actually employed because of my language skills, because I worked at a private company and I dealt with the Italian and

Spanish subsidiaries. I imagine that maybe in the private sector it would be a very good idea because some people need to, have to do it. For example if they go abroad and they have to deal with a foreign office.

- But the idea of having to adjust your English to non-native speakers as a native speaker of English doesn't bother you?

No, not at all.

- Does the fact that you were raised bilingually, have an influence on your cultural ownership? Because you don't speak just one language, you might not feel English as to be *your* language?

No I don't think so. You know, I did all my school and college in university in England. So I would say that even at a certain point English was probably a bit stronger, probably still is stronger than my Italian. My Italian I had to do by myself, taking extra lessons. I mean, I could talk Italian but I didn't know the grammar at one point. As a teenager I had to start learning the grammar and I also did it at University.

Scale importance NSEs accommodation to NNSEs: 5

Scale willingness to participate in language training: 5

Scale NSEs responsibility in communication: 4 (depends on level of English)

Scale NSEs already accommodating to NNSEs: 3

Interview 7: participant 7 (10-06-2011)

Age: 48

Country of birth: New-Zealand (grew up in England)

First language: English

Culture: English

Time working here: 17 years

- How often do you have to communicate with non-native speakers when you're at work?

All day, every day. The majority of people in this organisation use English as a second or third language.

- What kind of different nationalities do you come across when you're at work?

Obviously, we have a lot of Dutch people, because we're based in the Netherlands. We have a lot of Romanians. I'll look it up for you later. There's a very big spread. It's not just a spread in nationalities, there's also a wide spread of language abilities among the staff and education levels. Because of course, if you're looking at a group of doctors who speak English, there obviously all fluent, but our security officers, we have a wider range from some who are quite fluent to some who are very new to speaking English. The levels of English spoken, typically the Dutch are very, very good. If you look at some people from other places, it's still a more basic level of English. It's still better than any foreign language I can speak, but it's a huge difference and you have to take that into account.

- So would you say that the higher you go into the organisation, the better people speak English?

Normally, yes. You can see a direct correlation, often not always, that the more professional educated employees, like for example the lawyers, have a much higher standard of English than say some of the guys that move the furniture around. But again, it's always a surprise for me as a native speaker, how well they speak English. But there is a marked difference.

- Do you use a specific variety of English?

The way I speak now is the way I always speak. But you have to bear in mind that sometimes I have to go back and explain it again. But that's very rare. Once people have been here a while, because again they use it all day every day themselves, their standard level of English just shoots up.

- When you're at work, do you often come across communication problems, with non-native or native speakers?

It is rare, but the typical scenario I can give you where it starts as a problem, well it's not a problem, there may be occasional glitches. If you imagine we just had an intake of, let's say, Romanians, and they're security officers, they all speak English. They often speak it quite well but they can be shy or unsure all day in front of everybody else. You can literally see this and it only takes about two weeks, so they sit there and they're unsure of speaking, and then sometimes you have to make sure they understand. But literally in a two week period they take off and their language ability just goes ahead leaps and bounds. It's practice and confidence for them. It mostly takes a couple of weeks and then they're away.

- So you don't often come across any large communication problems?

No, not really. This is a very friendly organisation and if people don't understand, they'll tell you. As a native speaker, my vocabulary is usually bigger than theirs. And they're always upfront about it and ask "what does that one mean?". In the day to day stuff, very rarely.

- You already kind of answered my next question, which would be if you have ever been directly addressed by a non-native speaker of English that he or she couldn't understand you. Which, as you have said, people often do here.

Yes, but you have got to imagine, it's an international organisation. It's not like they have to sit there and go like "oh, I'm the one person that does not understand". Almost everybody here speaks English as a second language. There have been people here longer, who ask them the same thing, because their first language might be Indian or Arabic. What goes around comes around. It's only lazy people like me who don't speak any other languages that get away with it.

- So you would say that because there are so many other non-native speakers of English, the bar is set lower when it comes to addressing someone to repeat oneself for example?

Yes, I don't think I've ever come across people who are scared of saying that. Except for that first couple of weeks that they arrive, but then they're new and very shy and embarrassed. Will we think

they're stupid if they don't understand, typical everyday human things. But they're told from day one: "If you don't understand, then ask". We've only ever had one problem person, who's language skills was not up to standard and we had to remove them. Because all though they did speak English, it was not a sufficient standard for security. Because it's okay when you're sitting face-to-face and I can repeat myself three times to make sure you understand, but that's no good for us on the radio in an emergency. But that's the only one where, that person, where she couldn't cope and therefore it was not up to standard. And that person was moved to another department, where speed was not that important.

- You said it mostly vocabulary where non-native speakers tend to have problems?

Yes. It's not unusual for someone to ask me, when they're writing, to check it, or "I want to say this, how would you say it?". They'll just informally put their head around the door and ask, because I'm a native speaker. I had someone just the other day who rang me up and said "I want to say this, does it sound right?". Because it's very much different if you're saying something than when you have to write it. That's when people often ask for a bit of assistance. It is minor assistance, because they know what they want to say. They just want to make sure they've written it correctly. Verbally, it wouldn't be a problem. If you spend all your time writing then it's fine, but these guys don't. They only speak English, they're written English can be quite, it's not so important.

- When you have to write an e-mail to a non-native speaker of English, do there tend to be problems?

No, I don't have a problem with that. It's often the other way, because I make a point of writing very clear, like anybody should, you should be writing clearly anyway so it can't be misunderstood. The problem is sometimes, and this is why they ask, because they get experience from other people when they're writing in another language, that they're not sure what that means, because it's somebody writing in a second language. Often it's just basically editing, I just edit for people every now and then.

- You say you try to always write clearly. What do you think clearly entails?

Writing in real sentences. Because sometimes what you'll see, of course it's easier for me to spot as the native speaker, is there gets confusion and people say "well I wrote, and you should've done this and you did the wrong thing". And then when I'll look at it, it's actually "well because the way you wrote it is, it can be interpreted both ways. And that's when the problems can come in. And that's

often why we'll get a phone call from someone who asks us to check something for them. And make sure that it does say what they want it to say. But the day to day stuff is fairly simple.

- And what about when a non-native speaker doesn't understand what you are saying but doesn't directly say it, are you good at picking up on that would you say?

Yes, you can normally tell.

- How can you tell?

It's that look on their face when, and again it's normally the very new ones because they haven't necessarily, they're still worried about you know, how to admit it when they don't understand something quite. And of course it's not just the language, of course they're in a new environment. So when I try to tell them to maybe go somewhere, and they are like "I'm not sure what he's saying" and they're not even sure what that place is because they don't know their way around the building yet, you can just see it that there's a sort of glaze look. They'll just nod, "do you understand me?" and they'll just be nodding away and won't admit they don't.

- And then what do you do?

Then I'll ask them to tell me. Of course you have to be very polite about these things. We're not here to give people a hard time about their language skills. It will come, you know? It's amazing how fast and how well they speak English. This organisation has always been very friendly from day 1, because I've been here since it opened. People are never shy of just asking. If they're not sure they'll ask, and they'll ask anybody. And of course, they'll ask their friends, there's always that way around it. But only in the beginning, when there's that you're orientating yourself in a new environment. You know, communication is a two way thing. We all have our responsibility to make sure we can be understood. You can't complain they don't understand if we make it hard.

- So you're pretty lenient towards non-native speakers of English making mistakes?

Of course.

- Has it always been this way from the start?

Well, I've worked for the UN before, but yes we work with people on all levels and we're here to get our job done. It's not a competition about how clever I can be, because I don't speak any other languages. It's up to him, it's up to me to make sure I am understood. If I'm saying something to

somebody and they don't understand what I mean then I have to explain it. I can give you a typical example of that. So many people, especially Europeans, don't speak English, they speak American because they watch American tv. So, and it will be something very small, that I'll be talking about something, let's say the pavement, they don't know what the pavement is. They know what the sidewalk is, and it's literally that, they'll just say "pavement? What's that?". And I'll say "the sidewalk", "Ooh!". It's as little as that.

- That's interesting that you say English and American are different languages, I don't see it that way.

Well, they're not really, but there are lots of words that are different. For example, if we're talking about candies, because they'll pick it up from tv, in English the word is sweets. And it's lots of things. Of course, I understand, often the Americans don't necessarily understand the word pavement. They only know sidewalk. It's often an one way street there as well. That's why I mentioned at the beginning it's not just second language, even between the American and the English speaker there's, which is why I mean, it is the same language but they have different words for things and not all Americans necessarily understand them in English, which can lead to fun. Of course we always win, because English English is the official UN language, like French French is and not Quebec French.

- Ok, you mentioned that you do not speak a foreign language. Did you ever had foreign language classes in the UK at school? Was it mandatory?

It was, but now we're going back a long time. Yes we had French lessons I believe for about a year. And that was it.

- I don't exactly know how it is now in the UK, but as far as I know, not a lot of Brits speak a foreign language right?

No, no, very, very poor is it. But there's the two reasons. Now I live on the outside and looking back I think there's two main reasons. Firstly, it's not compulsory. Well it is, but only up to a very short period. I think my first French lesson was when I was about fourteen years old. Whereas I notice in other parts of Europe, they start at about seven. The other advantage a lot of the Europeans have, and many other places around the world, is of course you watch a lot of foreign television and it's in English with subtitles. You won't ever see a non-English programme on British television, not unless it's some really fancy obscure channel that does foreign films at two o'clock in the morning. You just won't see it. The other things is of course, you get a day to day benefit of it, in term of you living on

the border of Germany and speaking to Germans every day. For the UK and Ireland, we just don't meet them. And because we don't meet them, we don't think about them. So it's very insular, I can see much more how insular the UK is for foreign languages. And then as you said, the world of business, the main language is English. We still go to meetings thinking everybody will speak English. And they will, hence we're having this conversation in English.

- Have you tried to learn Dutch?

Not particularly. Bear in mind, we never expected to be here this long. We were like "oh we have got another year's contract, we'll stay for another year" and when I came here they said we'd be here three years, maximum five if we were lucky. Now were looking to close, but if someone would offer me a job in another organisation and I would be here for another ten years, yeah then I would actually learn Dutch. And the other thing is of course, this being the Hague, you don't actually need to speak Dutch. It's very, very easy. And I think it's actually a better reflection on Dutch society, for example, like I just mentioned the television programmes are in English with Dutch subtitles, whereas in Germany they will be dubbed into German. So, everyday everyone in Holland is getting their English lessons. Which of course means I get to watch them without having to speak Dutch. And I never ever been stuck in Holland with a language problem. The normal day to day stuff, everybody speaks English very, very well and at all ages which is always very surprising.

- Still, you don't speak a foreign language yourself, but you are very lenient towards non-native speaker mistakes you said.

Yeah, because who am I to decide whether someone has poor English? What other languages do I speak?

- So you don't think that because you're a native speaker of English, non-native speakers of English should just learn to speak better English if they make mistakes etcetera.

Well, there's a lot of that. But there's also a lot of caricature from that as well. It's like the loud American. Some of them are. And the mean Dutch person, who won't spend their money. That's right but there's always an amount of truth behind some of it you know. And we have jokes about these things in the organisation, because you can always take a dig at someone. One of my classic ones I often use when we talk about languages, and of course all the people who speak English as a second or third language which should really put me to shame, is "Listen mate, if you can speak English proper like I do, then you can tell me". But people speak it all very, very well. And it

surprised me well. We mentioned the education levels earlier, and my surprise, not people like the lawyers because they all speak excellent English, is how good somebody we just actually pay to move furniture around the building, how well they'll speak English. That was very much a surprise.

- Do you think your view on non-native speakers of English is shared by other native speakers, like your friends for example?

I think that if they we're here probably yes, because you get used to it. If you come in here in this organisation thinking they should speak it, you'll soon be cut down to size. I mean I can sit here and be like "oh you didn't know the word sympathise properly? Well, how dumb of you", but then you actually speak another four languages. And I still can't speak any. So it's, you'd have to be incredibly arrogant to have that sort of view and you would also probably be very unpopular.

- I also meant to ask you if you consciously make changes in your use of English when you talk to non-native speakers of English?

Here, no. In this place no, because the standard of English is so very, very high. Other places I've been, where we had people who speak English, their level of English has been very, very low, which is fine. But they were employed for things like drivers, and not to write anything or have in-depth conversation. They just had to understand where to go, what to do and how to get there. So, you have to lower it down to keep it simple. But it's all about the recipient isn't it? Because you don't want to embarrass someone, having them stood there feeling like an idiot, because I was unwilling to come down to his level of language. That'd be mean to do that to someone. I'm not employing him as a secretary.

- How did you accommodate to them?

You just have to make sure you speak, well, the joke would be to "speak louder and slower and shout to Johnny Foreigner", no these are people you work with every day and you also get used to it. You wouldn't say to somebody "I need you to go and take a car, proceed to the airport, and greet somebody coming off an aeroplane". What we say is, "go to the airport, and I want you to meet so and so and bring him back". That's it. You just keep it simple, you don't have to be condescending. You never have to be condescending about it, you just have to keep it simple.

- We talked a bit about ownership of English before..

Ownership is a joke.

- You think?

Yeah. Of course, hence the joke about “when you can speak proper English like I does” you know. Most of the jokes like that are actually between people like me and Americans. Because their native speakers as well. So you can afford to tease. I would never tease somebody about their language ability unless I know them very well, but if their American well it’s different because they are a native speaker as well. So, we can pull out, there’s no prisoners takes there. But they can do the same thing to me of course. Because we can.

- But you do make a clear distinction between American and English.

Yeah, but that’s because it’s a practical issue. It’s not that I don’t understand Americans. I’ve never had an American I don’t understand. Sometimes it can be a cultural reference that I don’t understand, because I know nothing about baseball or something like that. And of course that will normally lead to a bit of teasing that goes both ways. But it’s more likely for an American not to understand me, and again that’s because of the example of the word pavement. They just don’t hear it, whereas we too watch all these American shows, so we get to learn American, they don’t necessarily get to learn English.

- Has your way of speaking English changed since you moved to the Netherlands?

I think I have changed the way I speak. For start, I have to make myself more clear. So you tend to do it all the time, it becomes sort of a habit of speaking like that. It’s a two way street, if you’re willing to speak to me in a second language, then it’s my responsibility to make sure I’m clear. But for me personally it has changed a lot, because there’s been environmental change yeah.

- So when it comes to responsibility, you think it lies more with the native speaker?

Well like I said it’s a two way street. It is my responsibility to make myself understood, but it is also your responsibility to say so.

- Have you ever had any language training that was work initiated where you would learn to accommodate your use of English to non-native speakers of English?

No. But I don’t think that’s really necessary. I don’t think I need to be told to go on a course to learn to treat people with a little bit of respect that don’t necessarily speak English as well as I do.

- So it would not be something you would be willing to participate in?

Well, I could but I'm not convinced of the need for it.

- Ok, so for you right now, working in this company, it would not be something you would be interested in that much. But do you think it would be helpful for other people.

Well, I'm smiling now because you know we were talking about stereotypes and "speak to the non-native slowly and loudly", yes I could see know the course on "How to speak to Johnny Foreigner". Try to speak slower and louder. I mean that's what it almost sound like, as a course.

- Well, I've interviewed other native speakers of English and they've said that you acquire these skills naturally, once you move abroad.

But you've also got to use it at home. I mean, if I was to get a job with, I don't know, with a bunch of rubbish street, who pick up rubbish from the streets, you'd also have to be giving instructions they could understand. They might be a group of people who might have a very low education level. Their reading level might be very poor in their own language. So again, you'd have to make sure you're getting your message understood.

- So you would see it helpful for people in another business setting maybe?

No, I think it's a natural thing you have to do, no matter who you're dealing with. You don't talk to children like you talk to adults. You don't use the big words, and some adults you don't use the big words with. If you go visit your doctor, you'd expect him to explain things to you not in a language he uses with another doctor. And I think it's the same where ever you go in live, in your own language or dealing with a second language. It's the same principle, you adjust your language to your audience. And I think people do it subconsciously.

Scale importance of NSEs accommodating to NNSEs: 5 (depends on who you're talking to)

Scale willingness to participate in training: 3 (not convinced of the need for it; but he'll turn up)

Scale NSEs responsibility in communication: 4

Scale NSEs accommodating already: 5 (people do it subconsciously)

Interview 8: participant 8 (11-06-2011)

Age: 24

Country of birth: Australia

First language: English

Culture: Australian/Chinese

Time working here: 4 months, previously 9 months (in Hong Kong) works in ING (insurance part)

- How often do you have to communicate with non-native speakers of English when you're at work?

Every day. Because I mostly work with Dutch people.

- What kind of different nationalities do the people you work with have?

I work in a team where about, with five Dutch people, two Indians and a Bulgarian who was born in America and a Chinese intern and a guy. He's half Dutch actually, half Dutch and half Indonesian.

- And how often do you work with native speakers of English?

Ok, native speakers. I guess some of them are native know I think about it. But they all speak Dutch. But mostly it's non-native.

- Do you ever come across any communication problems at work?

Yes, because I guess they speak in Dutch a bit so I guess then maybe socially I don't really understand what they're saying. Yeah the people I work with talk amongst themselves in Dutch so I don't really understand and do my work, but not really other than that.

- So when you're talking English to someone you usually don't experience communication problems?

No, not really. Sometimes they might say something and they'll go "what's the word for this?".

- So would you say the people you work with have a high command of the English language?

Yeah.

- So that would have to do with the fact why you don't often experience any communication problems?

Yes, yeah. Well, is this just for the Netherlands or for other places as well? Because I guess, when I was in Hong Kong it was a bit more difficult, especially when I was working in the local business unit because they all spoke Cantonese and it was a bit more difficult communicating.

- Would that be because the level of English in Hong Kong was lower than in the Netherlands would you say?

Yes.

- It's ok if you talk about your experience in Hong Kong as well, maybe you can compare the situations. Were you ever directly address by someone who could not understand what you were saying?

They couldn't understand me? Well, I don't think I've, because ING is really international everybody who works there would have an ok command of English at least. So I am not in a situation where they wouldn't be able to understand me. Maybe I probably have to speak slower or something, but yeah. I guess most of the issues happen socially, when we go to lunch or something and they all speak their own language and maybe someone next to you would have to translate.

- And what about indirect miscommunication? Do you notice it when a non-native speaker of English does not understand you without him or her saying so?

Well, I think sometimes people have difficulty understanding me but maybe it might not even be because of language, but maybe just in general when you work. But if you're talking in relation to language right? I guess it's the same as they just don't understand you because of what you're saying and not just because of language. They'll just like look at you and they'll look confused right? Or they might ask you "so do you mean this?". Basically you can just tell if they're confused.

- Do you consciously change something in you speech actions when talking to non-native speakers? For example your speech rate or?

Yeah. You'd speak probably slower.

- I've talked to other native speakers and they said that way of speaking English has changed from their stay here. Like, their family would ask them why they would talk so slow for example. Now you haven't been here that long of course, but would you say the same accounts a bit for your English?

Well, maybe you might, yeah, I guess because. Yeah ok, I think I might just focus on Hong Kong because here everybody speaks English really well. Well, maybe you would use just the main words. You probably don't speak English correctly, but you just use the main words to get across what you are trying to say. The main points, I guess.

- Do you make a distinction between written or spoken English? For example, would you say writing to a non-native speaker of English is more difficult than face to face contact or the other way around?

I think it kind of depends on the situation. Sometimes I think it's better to e-mail first, so you can clarify things more there and then if there are small things that you can't clarify in an e-mail you just speak to them.

- Do you speak a foreign language?

No, I think I should say no, because people who have heard me speak have said that it doesn't sound like anything at all.

- Which language are you referring to?

I probably would say Cantonese but I don't really speak, I speak a special dialect and it's not actual Cantonese and my dialect is really bad as well.

- Did you learn it from your parents or..?

I guess that when I was little I spoke to my grandparents in Cantonese.

- Ok, because I wanted to ask you if you think having learnt another language would help you accommodate your use of English to non-native speakers of English?

Well, yeah I think it would. Because then you would have understanding of linguistics I think. So you would have a bit of understanding of how language works.

- Would you consider yourself lenient towards non-native speaker mistakes?

Definitely, definitely. I think, like I have a French friend and I think it's just perfect, which is always, she always gets really annoyed at herself when she's like "Oh, I can't get it right!" while it makes total sense to me what she's saying. Sometimes I can't find words myself either so, I mean, yeah. Because I travelled a lot, I think I'm maybe more open-minded. I definitely like meeting people from different cultures and I don't expect them to speak English perfectly of course. Most of the time I understand them and sometimes you don't really even need words. As long as you can just like, get a jest from what they're saying and you can relate to it then I mean, it's alright.

- Where do you think it comes from that you're so open minded so to say?

I guess I'm really interested in different cultures and I travel a lot. I'm really interested in like hearing people's stories and, yeah that's right. I don't know.

- And what about English, do you see it as your language or more of a world language?

Yeah, a world language I think. I'm just so, it's great that so many people speak English.

- Who do you think has more responsibility when it comes to assuring communication to run smoothly, the native or the non-native speaker or both?

I think it's kind of embarrassing that I can only speak one language right, and non-native speakers can communicate fluently in their own language and they can communicate in a different language.

- So you think it is also your responsibility to make yourself understood?

Yeah.

- Would you be willing to participate in a training where you would learn on a basic level to adjust your way of speaking to non-native speakers of English to make yourself better understood?

Like, to have some training where native speakers and non-native speakers kind of show up and have conversations, is that what it is?

- There is not really a set model yet, but that would be a possibility, yes. A training where native speakers would have contact with non-native speakers yes. But also basic things like to speak slower and articulate more, or repeating yourself a bit more often those sort of things. There isn't a devised model yet so. Do you think such a training is relevant though?

Well I think there are lots of these things already, like I would have language exchanges for example on Couchsurfing.org. You would have a lot of language exchanges offers on the noticeboards. Yeah I don't know, if I were to be in a language sort of exchange thing, no it might be a bit, I don't know how helpful it would be. What helps is I think, if you go to these meet-up groups and you would speak to people in English and you like become friends with them, yeah just going to these expat groups. Then I think it might help because sometimes I think people speak English really well and I think that's just because they speak English to people all the time. Yeah I think it would help if you had like one on one conversations with people. I think it's better to find people who you just really click with because you can become friends with them and talk to them. Otherwise it becomes a bit more like a class. Also, you shouldn't really speak like a little kid for people to understand you. Because I feel that the way I speak normally, people kind of understand me already.

Scale importance of NSEs accommodating to NNSEs: 4

Scale willingness to participate in language training: 3

Scale NSEs responsibility in communication: 4

Scale NSEs already accommodating to NNSEs: 4