

## Creating language awareness in the EFL setting: teaching dialects to English students in Finland

Elizabeth Peterson (University of Jyväskylä, University of Helsinki)

English students in Finnish universities have studied English for an average of 10 years at the time they are accepted into a university program in English, with 97% of Finnish upper secondary school children choosing English as their main foreign language (Statistics Finland 2005). For many of these students, English has achieved a personal status far beyond that of a classroom language; i.e. facility in English is a stake in global youth culture (Androutsopoulos and Georgakopoulou, 2003). Sjöholm (2004) reports that Finnish teen-agers can spend up to 51 hours per week being exposed to English through such media as television, music, computer games and the Internet. Further, there is a direct correlation between such leisure activities and a preference for US vocabulary over British. Those educating such students at an advanced level in their English studies have the responsibility to develop the knowledge of English beyond the monolithic views of British English as classroom English and American English as the language of popular culture (Suutari 2007).

This paper describes a curriculum for teaching regional and ethnic dialects to English students in a foreign language setting, focusing on methods, what makes such instruction crucial for experts in English, and what distinguishes this teaching from a native-speaker setting. It is argued that students in the EFL setting have much to gain from critical discussions of language ideology due to the very fact that they are not native speakers. Through tailored audio exercises students are able to develop both aural and evaluative skills outside of the realm of typical foreign language exposure. Through targeted writing tasks they are able to apply nonstandard grammatical rules and identify with a minority voice. Further, they are able to identify as language learners the non-standard features that align with their own “imperfect” learning of English, which calls into question the rights of nonnative speakers of English (Jenkins 2002). Through such exposure the use of English becomes something more equitable rather than a commodity; students are able to recognize the complexities involved with language varieties and their own role as a speaker of English.

### References

- Androutsopoulos, Jannis K. and Alexandra Georgakopoulou (Eds.) (2003). *Discourse Constructions of Youth Identities*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Jenkins, Jennifer. (2002). A sociolinguistically based, empirically researched pronunciation syllabus for English as an International Language. *Applied Linguistics* 23 (1):83-101.
- Sjöholm, Kaj. (2004). The complexity of the learning and teaching of EFL among Swedish-minority students in bilingual Finland. *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 36 (6):685-695.
- Suutari, Hanna. (2007). *From Prison Break to Desperate Housewives: Learning Language and culture from American fictional television series*. Department of Languages, University of Jyväskylä: proseminar thesis.