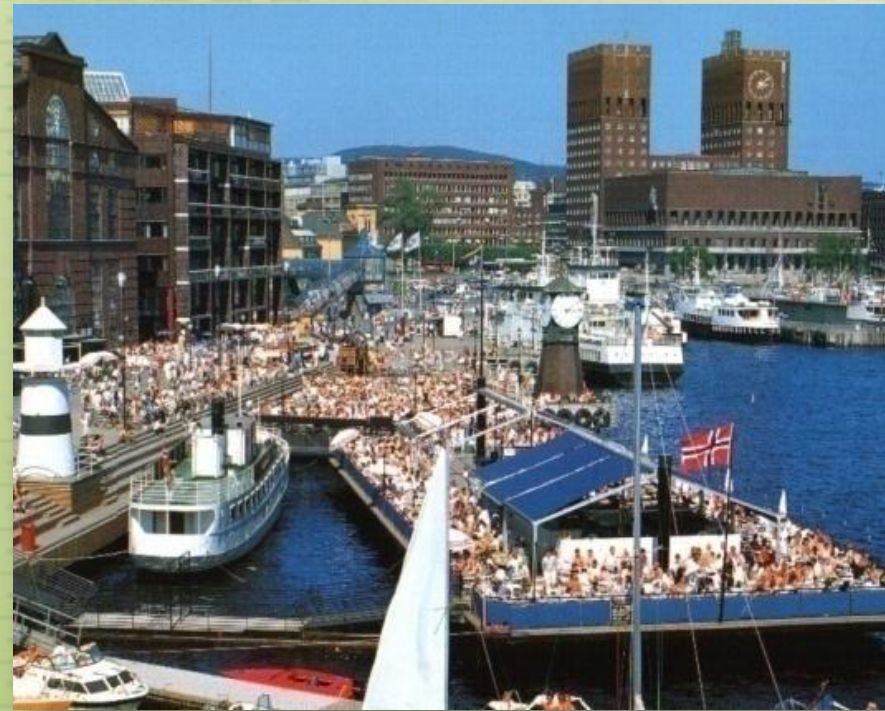


OSLO AND AKERSHUS  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE  
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# English as the academic 'lingua franca': looking back in anger and looking forward

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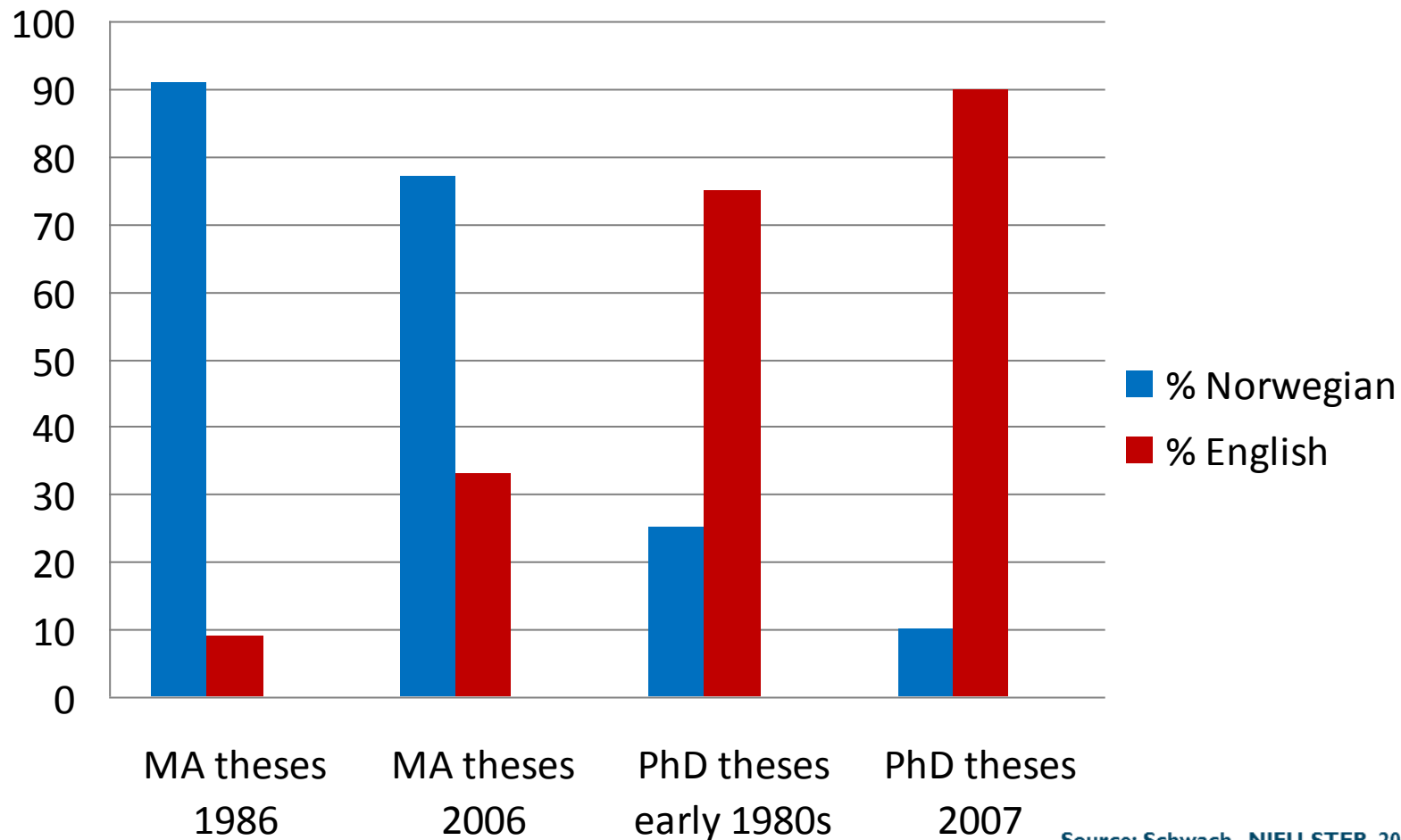
# Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences has four faculties

Faculty of Health Sciences		Faculty of Education and International Studies	
Dean		Dean	
Department of: - Behavioural Science - Occupational Therapy, Prosthetics and Orthotics - Pharmacy and Biomedical Laboratory Sciences - Physiotherapy - Health, Nutrition and Management - Radiography and Dental Technology - Nursing	Faculty Administration	Department of: - Early Childhood Education - Primary and Secondary Teacher Education - International Studies and Interpreting - Vocational Teacher Education	Faculty Administration
Faculty of Social Sciences		Faculty of Technology, Art and Design	
Dean		Dean	
Department of: - Archivistics, Library and Information Science - Journalism and Media Studies - Public Management - Social Work, Child Welfare and Social Policy School of Business	Faculty Administration	Department of: - Civil Engineering and Energy Technology - Art, Design and Drama - Industrial Development - Computer Science - Product Design	Faculty Administration

# This presentation will address the following:

- Brief overview of the (sometimes) perceived threat of English in Norwegian academia
- The language of dissertations/publication
- Some elements of unease with academic English
- Epistemicide and its effects on national culture
- The academic writing course in Oslo, designed to redeem all ills

# Languages of MA and PhD theses at Norwegian institutions of higher education



Source: Schwach, NIFU-STEP, 2009

# Possible cultural factors relating to English for academic purposes in Norway

- Recent nation-building: 1850s to 1906, then post-war
- Population of 5 million, 2 official forms of Norwegian
- Strong sense of national pride re. literary production
- Increasing use of English in high-status domains
- Informality in academic contexts: perhaps related to the social-democratic ideal of equality for all
- Resistance partly due to a sense of alienation from the dominant anglophone discourses?
- Irritation: 'Norwegian should be good enough'
- Loss of the Norwegian publication tradition
- *Look Back in Anger* and Jimmy Porter

# Norwegians and professional English

- Skills deficits found in 3 main areas: corporate life; academia; government ministries

(Hellekjær, 2007-2011, UiO)

- Hard evidence of need for ESP in Norwegian academia (still not readily available)
- Writing course: preliminary needs analyses show
  - Apprehension (fear, uncertainty)
    - “I feel this [communicating professionally in English] is a challenging task”
  - Ambivalence (reluctance, necessity)
    - “Not too happy, but I just have to do it.”

# Resistance, reluctance, acceptance

- Resistance to English mainly in ‘soft’ sciences
- Diglossia and power differentials: ‘meetings held in English tend to be short’
- Mastery of English linked to mastery of a professional situation, ie **having a voice** both in local and international contexts
- Language domain loss or domain gain?
- Pragmatic approach, related to parallel language use:

*‘I would like to use Norwegian to a large extent, because I want to contribute to developing the child welfare field of Norway. But I also realize that it is important to exchange with other professionals in other countries...’*

# Epistemicide

- ‘knowledge that has been construed **in accordance with other cultural norms** often has to be radically reformulated in translation to bring it into line with English discourse expectations. Such domestication procedures (which often go far beyond the word or sentence level to involve textual organization and the whole rhetorical approach) effectively **repackage the text in terms of the dominant epistemology, thereby rendering invisible rival forms of knowledge.**’

(Emphases mine, Karen Bennett, call for papers, 2011)

- This is often a problem for Norwegian, a small language
- The lost tradition of academic publishing in Norwegian



# Hyland 2012: *Disciplinary Identities*

- Problem: ‘individuals’ differential access to particular communicative resources’
- This access is influenced by ‘education, class, social [or academic] position, ethnicity, gender’
- ‘Contextual spaces’ eg top journals are guarded by gatekeepers, and may seem off –limits. ? Alienation
- Challenge: to ‘bridge the gap between language and context, to understand how discourse connects micro instances of identity construction with social and ideological macro structures’ Hyland, 2012, pp. 50-51
- ‘EAP teaching and learning contexts [...] could usefully devote curricular space to debates about academic knowledge production.’ Curry and Lillis, 2004, p. 664

# Negotiating ambivalences: the staff/researcher writing course design

- 10 researchers from a mix of disciplines
- Swales/Feak 2012; Feak/Swales 2009
- Preparation: detailed needs analysis, including this:

*Please write about your professional activities and any thoughts you have on using English in academia.*

- 5 x 5 hour, fortnightly meetings
- Formation of a community of writers who present their reworked draft texts and discuss changes made
- Community of writers is two-fold: in the writing group itself, and between individuals and their reference articles
- Peer support/discussion, **performing** academic identity
- Aims of exam: confidence-building, awareness of the rhetorical toolkit needed for own field of research, ownership of EAP

# Developing explicit awareness of writing skills through participant-centredness

- Hyland 2005, 'Stance and Engagement' article
- Challenge 1—"overcoming apprehension, encouraging participation." Presenting during the course enables a **secure platform** from which to **talk with authority**
- Challenge 2—"knowledge dilemmas" during the presentation sessions: **participant as expert** (content); **EAP professional as facilitator** in an exchange between experts and commentators—an intermediary role.
- **Roles are dynamic, flexible** : participants shift between role as expert and role as commentator as does the EAP mediator
- **Participant is central**, reflecting on own researcher identity development in English
- Rhetorical awareness gained through active group membership, course content, redrafting, logs → increased sense of ownership of English-es
- (International groups)

# From pre-course needs analysis, to post-course reflection statement

- NA: *‘Instead of generating creativity, I experience myself as wing clipped and muted when I try to formulate an academic text in English. My vocabulary is too limited, the nuances I express naturally in Norwegian become brutal and crude, and I feel like a child.’*
- RS: *‘The big revelation is that by working on all these details we have been made aware of, the academic landscape as such seems a lot clearer to me. Its almost as if you have handed me a map, making it a lot more accessible. I know it is still possible to get lost, but a map is a great tool!’*
- Moves from the **personal** to the **instrumental**

# Summing up: The HiOA writing course

- Resistance and ambivalence
- We see only the tip of the iceberg
- Up-front acknowledgement and discussion of cultural and language issues
- Evaluations, linked to needs analyses, are positive
- Ongoing challenge: dealing with the power implications/cultural losses or gains/ caused by the anglophone imperative in academic publishing
- Negotiating old identities and performing new ones

# Thank you for your attention!



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