



# Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education

ISSN: 0305-7925 (Print) 1469-3623 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ccom20>

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To cite this article: Anna Mazenod (2017): Lost in translation? Comparative education research and the production of academic knowledge, Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, DOI: [10.1080/03057925.2017.1297696](https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2017.1297696)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2017.1297696>



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# Lost in translation? Comparative education research and the production of academic knowledge

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## ABSTRACT

The worth of academic knowledge tends to be tested against global metrics of citations and articles published in high-ranking English language academic journals. This paper examines academic knowledge production in three local fields of research with different national languages (English, Finnish and French). It focuses on knowledge production on the topic of apprenticeship where there are distinctive differences in the three local research fields and the associated patterns of academic publication over a 15-year period. The findings suggest that publication patterns are still largely tied to the respective national languages. Concerns are raised about the limited visibility of non-Anglophone local contexts and conceptual frameworks as filtered through global academic knowledge production processes. The language practices in the production of academic knowledge need to be challenged to ensure that knowledge from these sources is not lost in translation or in the re-contextualisation for global audiences.

## KEYWORDS

Local knowledge; scientific capital; apprenticeship; research translation; knowledge dissemination; comparative education

## Introduction

Ideas in the academic community circulate largely through publications (Schriewer and Keiner 1992). The competition to obtain visibility for one's ideas through publications has intensified in the last decades. An increasing number of researchers are seeking to publish academic journal articles (Plume and Van Weijen 2014), and many scientific fields have seen a proliferation in the number of academic journals (Ertl et al. 2015). There is evidence of academic journals going to great lengths to jockey for a better position in the global rankings as measured, for example by the journal impact factor (Martin 2016; Times Higher Education 2015). Journal article citation counting systems are also used to derive quantifiable measures of the influence or impact of an individual academic and their research. These quantifiable metrics measuring the researcher's influence and impact on the global scale may be used to determine decisions around funding of research in local settings (Deem, Mok, and Lucas 2008; Lillis and Curry 2010). Researchers are thus implicated in the race to be considered 'world-class' (May 2005) regardless of whether they seek impact for their research primarily in local or in global settings.

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A critical feature of this race is that researchers writing in English are likely to find it easier to attract visibility for their ideas in the most highly ranked journals. This is because the globally most highly ranked – that is, prestigious – journals tend to be published in English (Lillis and Curry 2010). Furthermore, the most prestigious journals are typically UK- or US-based academic journals, which Lillis and Curry (2010) refer to as academic journals from the ‘Anglophone centre’. Thus academic researchers, especially researchers aspiring for ‘world-class’ status, are likely to be publishing in English even though it may not be their native tongue, and their original research setting may not be English-speaking. Deciding against publishing in English can be perceived as a risky strategy as English is increasingly acknowledged as the *lingua franca* of academic research and scholarship (Gentil and Séror 2014). The increasing use of a common language medium facilitates sharing insights from different parts of the world and it makes it easier for research debates to take place on a global scale (Swales 2004). Significant inequalities in gaining access to participate in this global debate have, however, been identified (Canagarajah 1996; Marginson 2008). Researchers working in the fields of language teaching and linguistics have, for example, identified inequalities of access to publishing in Anglophone centre-based journals (Lillis and Curry 2010). These findings have sparked important initiatives to encourage and support submissions to journals from beyond the Anglophone centre, as reported by Lillis, Magyar and Robinson-Pant (2010).

Comparative education research has traditionally been enriched by insights from different local settings that can have global significance. The dominance of English is potentially having an impoverishing effect on the generation of knowledge (Flowerdew 2001). This paper compares aspects of the production of academic knowledge in one specific area of education research in three different European languages. It explores the relationship between the language of publication and the country-contexts through a specific focus on research on apprenticeships as a form of initial vocational education. Apprenticeship is an important topic of research as there is considerable political interest in promoting apprenticeship-type learning across Europe and beyond. Despite the ‘Eurocentricity’ of the study presented here, this article contributes to debates on knowledge production that are of concern to academic and education practitioner communities worldwide. The discussion that follows is presented in three substantive parts. The first part outlines the framework for relational analysis of the global and local dimensions of knowledge production processes. The second part describes the comparative study of three European apprenticeship systems (in England, Finland and France). The study involved a series of systematic reviews in the three different national languages and a layered process of comparative analysis to keep the cultural meanings of the research findings intact for as long as possible before translation from Finnish and French into English. The third part of the paper presents findings from the study, followed by a discussion and a conclusion.

## Global and local dimensions of knowledge production

To examine the role of language and geopolitics in the production of academic knowledge, this paper draws on three important concepts from Bourdieu: the concepts of scientific field, scientific capital and linguistic capital (Bourdieu 1991, 2004). These specific concepts arise from his theorisation of the social world through the broader concepts of the field and capital, which refer to the social environment and its structures (field) and advantageous

resources that individuals can have or accumulate (capital). These concepts are here used to examine different dimensions of the education research field, which is viewed as a scientific field that has some autonomy. It will be argued that education research activity takes place in local (national) fields, but that these national fields are influenced by the global field, for example through the language practices that privilege English linguistic capital. It should be noted that the term 'scientific' is not used here to denote an empiricist evaluation of the field, but rather in its Latin-based meaning denoting knowledge making (Lillis and Curry 2010).

Bourdieu developed his concept of the field to examine power and agency relationships in different social arenas. He defined the field as 'a structured field of forces, and also as a field of struggles to conserve or transform this field of forces' (Bourdieu 2004, 33). Bourdieu studied a number of different fields, for example the field of cultural production, and he pointed out affinities with the operation of the scientific field with these other fields. In his account of the scientific field, Bourdieu (2004) highlights how an individual researcher's quest for legitimacy within the field is about a struggle to accrue scientific capital that may subsequently be converted to other kinds of capital, for example economic capital through grants and academic positions. Scientific capital is essentially the acquisition of scientific authority, and this is the most important form of capital in the scientific field. Language practices in the scientific field can lead to the acquisition of another type of power, the acquisition of linguistic capital (Bourdieu 1991). The language practices that construct English as the lingua franca of the global scientific field give individual researchers with linguistic capital in English a competitive advantage (Gentil 2005). Mastering the *lingua franca*, and the particular linguistic features of academic English and its discipline-specific conventions, is an important kind of linguistic capital that can enhance the individual researcher's credibility and their scientific authority (Ljosland 2011). Thus linguistic capital can help to create scientific capital in the scientific field.

Bourdieu's concept of the field has been critiqued for being difficult to operationalise (Maton 2014). However, in the discussion here it is useful in highlighting the relational aspects of the global and local dimensions of research and the cross-field effects (Rawolle and Lingard 2013) that are crucial to understanding the role of the English language. This paper distinguishes between global and local dimensions of the education research field as different dimensions of the same field. In Bourdieu's (2004) theoretical framework, the local fields refer to individual disciplines. In the present discussion the local fields, however, refer to the three local (national) contexts, and the focus is on apprenticeship research, which will be shown to reflect different disciplinary combinations depending on the local context. The global and local should not, however, be interpreted as mutually exclusive dimensions, but rather intertwined and often entangled (Canagarajah 2005). The global research field is here defined as knowledge production through academic journal and other publications, conference proceedings and social media interactions at an international level. The global research field can be understood as a web of constellations where ideas, discourses, institutions and individuals can come to prominence and remain powerful or wane and disappear over time (Lindblad and Popkewitz 2004). Ideas, discourses, institutions and individuals can have high visibility in both global and local dimensions or remain characteristic to one dimension. For example, the development of a strong institutional or an individual scientific authority at a local level can lead to an institutional or individual scientific authority globally. It can, however, be more difficult for ideas and discourses that have been generated in local contexts to be recognised as tangibly valuable, for example in research assessment exercises (Curtis 2016).

The local research fields focused upon in this article are those of apprenticeship research fields in England, Finland and France. Academic knowledge production at the local levels typically engages with local, regional or national policy-makers, decision-makers and other local academics, and it may be perceived as being more applied in nature (Gunnarsson 1998). Whilst some knowledge in the local dimension is generated and disseminated in English, its role is not hegemonic (Lillis and Curry 2010). The local dimensions of the education research fields have instead tended to be characterised by a dominant use of the relevant local/national language(s). For example, in Finland the main academic and professional journals relating to education policy and practice are published in Finnish (journals such as *Kasvatus* and *Aikuiskasvatus*). The same is true for France (e.g. see French academic literature online portal <http://www.persee.fr>). The education-focused academic and professional journals published these two countries typically engage with regional and national policy and decision-making within their respective national borders. The reach of the French academic and professional journals, however, extends to the wider Francophone audience of academics in, for example, Belgium, Canada and Senegal. The example of France thus illustrates the interconnected nature of the global and local dimensions of the education research field.

A publication in a top-ranking journal can be interpreted as a relatively tangible instance of acquisition of scientific capital that the researcher may eventually be able to convert to economic capital through, for example, a faculty position. The increased interest in producing academic knowledge in English can be viewed in this light partly as an instrumental linguistic strategy for acquiring greater scientific capital (Gentil and S  ror 2014). It is thus important to acknowledge that there are additional challenges faced by non-native English-speakers in engaging in knowledge production in English. Research in language teaching and linguistics has developed techniques and approaches to academic writing through which non-native English speakers can be supported to overcome the challenges to publishing in English (see, e.g. Swales and Feak 2012). Some of the challenges to non-native English speakers have been identified as linguistic, for example relating to textual features, but also arising from the nature of academic literacy as a social practice (Lillis and Curry 2010). Inequalities of access can arise, for example, from differences in the style of academic writing that are preferred in linguistically bounded academic communities (Swales 2004). Research in this area has also highlighted how standards of US or UK academic English perform a gate-keeping function in academic publishing (Lillis and Curry 2010).

This gate-keeping has two significant unintended consequences. The first is the privileging of English and Anglophone centre meanings in the production of academic knowledge in the global dimension of the scientific field (Belcher 2007). It is through these meanings that academic knowledge generated in languages other than English is presented as global academic knowledge in Anglophone centre-based journals. In order to be published in Anglo-centre journals, academic knowledge that has not been produced in English needs to be translated into English. As Lillis and Curry (2010) have identified, this is in fact about more than translation, but rather about translation and re-contextualisation. Re-contextualisation takes place, because the original meanings and contexts from the local research setting(s) are entangled with the language of the knowledge production. The original meanings may not easily translate into the final language of publication. Thus the original meanings may not be adequately reflected in the final product of publication.

The second unintended consequence is the potential loss and appreciation of the variety of local contexts from which knowledge is generated. The local context may be presented as 'exotic', which can imply that it is of less importance or relevance to the global audience (Lillis and Curry 2010). The whole research agenda may be adapted to increase the likelihood of resulting publications passing the gate-keeping (Swales 2004). Lillis and Curry (2010) argue that knowledge generated in the Anglophone centre is more likely to be deemed of universal interest. They suggest that knowledge generated in other local contexts is more likely to raise demands for a detailed justification for international interest in this topic and the context. The local context may further be shrouded by what Meyer (2010) has identified as an influential 'global script' that is increasingly enacted by actors across the world. Evidence of a global script can be glimpsed, for example, in the operation of 'travelling policies' (Lindblad and Popkewitz 2004) that influence education policy in different local contexts. In virtually all scientific fields, this global script is written in English, and hence the script can unduly reflect Anglo-centric meanings and contexts for research.

The significance of the context in knowledge production has been highlighted by education researchers who have built on Bernstein's analysis of the logics of knowledge and knowledge production (Maton 2014). These analyses demonstrate that there are distinct processes of re-contextualisation that can be entirely separate from the processes of generating new knowledge itself. It is through these processes of re-contextualisation that new knowledge for dissemination is selected and organised, or even re-packaged, to address the presumed needs and interests of the target audience. These processes may not, however, be immediately obvious to the reader when faced with the final output of academic knowledge generation in the format of an academic journal article.

The significance of the local context, and the unequal power dynamics in the global generation of knowledge has also been highlighted in critiques of contemporary globalisation (Canagarajah 2005). These critiques of contemporary globalisation point to the existence of different traditions and cultures around research, and the stymieing of these differences. Canagarajah (2005) describes how a few dominant communities across the world are effectively imposing their 'discourses and intellectual traditions' (xiv) on other communities. Belcher (2007) has observed that it is challenging to illustrate what is, and what can be lost, in these monoglossic processes, as there is no scope for the differences to be articulated and so they remain absent from the discourses. Furthermore, '... the hegemony of English in the scientific sphere is such that many people are not even aware that there are other ways of encoding knowledge' (Bennett 2013, 95). Gate-keeping through the lingua franca can impose this absence, which is also reinforced by the universalising discourse in the scientific field that emphasises the final product of knowledge generation 'without due consideration for the context of its production' (May 2005, 199). The methodological approach for the present study on the production of academic knowledge in three different languages is now described, before turning to findings from the study.

## Research approach

This paper draws from a comparative study exploring the meaning of apprenticeship within three European state-funded apprenticeship systems. The English, Finnish and French apprenticeship systems were chosen as case studies based on Green's (1999) and Green, Wolf and Leney's (1999) typology of Western and Northern European education and training



systems. In this typology France is an example of the 'Latin rim' countries extending to Southern Europe; Finland is an example of Northern Europe and England an example of education and training systems in the UK and Ireland. The study design purposely examined European education and training systems with less celebrated apprenticeship traditions than the fourth type of Germany and the German-speaking countries.

A key research question was to identify any convergence or divergence in apprenticeship research in the three countries. This was examined through a multilingual systematic review, a series of systematic reviews that were conducted in tandem; one focusing on existing research published in English, one in Finnish and one in French. Systematic review is 'a review of research literature using systematic and explicit, accountable methods' (Gough, Oliver, and Thomas 2012, 2). An advantage of the systematic review method is that the data is not provoked by the researcher (Gough, Oliver, and Thomas 2012). The use of secondary sources enabled a comparative focus on three local research fields to be adopted within this single-author study. A systematic review of secondary sources enabled here to examine the 'contours of the research field in a given country, identifying the principal research questions and fields of research, reflecting on the categories and the terminology used' (Jobert, Marry, and Tanguy 1997, 2).

In the multilingual systematic review, three systematic reviews were undertaken to identify all the potentially relevant literature for review, and to establish linguistically bounded data sets for comparative analysis. The study capitalised on the researcher's fluency in the three languages to enable an in-depth comparison of the conceptualisation of terminology relating to apprenticeships. This minimised the potential for the meaning of concepts to be 'lost in translation' when the context for the use of a particular concept may differ from one country to another, partly due to cultural and intellectual traditions (Jobert, Marry, and Tanguy 1997, 1). The three systematic reviews conducted as part of this study followed the principles developed by the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre 2007). These principles promote the adoption of a systematic, step-by-step process to searching and reviewing literature through pre-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Gough, Oliver, and Thomas 2012). The key question in the systematic reviews was to identify what research or policy analysis findings on apprenticeships as a form of initial vocational education had been recently published in the three countries. The key inclusion criteria for the systematic reviews were the year of publication and a theoretical, research or policy-driven focus on apprenticeships as a form of initial vocational education. The reviews excluded official policy documents and material relating to the promotion of apprenticeships by, for example, professional associations. To ensure that the dataset was manageable for a single-author study, only publications from 1996–2012 were included (the systematic reviews commenced in 2011). Key exclusion criteria related to publications that focused on apprenticeships in countries other than at least one of the study countries and publications in French focusing on work-placement types of apprenticeship (Fr. *Alternance*). A small number of French publications focusing on returns to education approaches to apprenticeship research were also excluded at the final stage of the systematic review in French. A selection of this type of quantitative research was considered to suffice as an indication of the strength of this research culture, given that detailed review and analysis of these studies would have necessitated a distinct quantitative focus beyond the scope of the study.

**Table 1.** Publications reviewed in-depth by type, language and country focus.

Country focus	Total	Academic journal articles in English	Academic journal articles in other languages	Books/book chapters/ research reports in English	Books/book chapters in other languages
England	36	17	0	19	0
Finland	10	3	1 (in Finnish)	3	3 (in Finnish)
France	18	1	12 (in French)	3	2 (in French)
All	64	21	13	25	5

The publications identified through the systematic reviews included policy-driven analyses, exploration of theoretical or philosophical concepts and largely qualitative empirical research studies. A total of 64 publications were included in the final detailed review stage of the systematic reviews. This included 36 publications on the English apprenticeship system, 10 on the Finnish and 18 on the French apprenticeship system. Academic journal articles made up the majority of publications as detailed in Table 1.

This final list included 34 journal articles – the focus of this paper. Of these, 21 journal articles were published in English, 17 of which had been written by UK-based researchers, 3 by Finnish researchers and 1 by a team that included a French researcher. There were a further 12 journal articles published in French and one in Finnish (see Appendix 1 for a breakdown of the articles by journal title). The publications identified through the final detailed review were subjected to thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006), first undertaken separately in the three languages. The data from the systematic reviews was complemented by semi-structured interviews with academic experts on apprenticeships in each of the countries. This paper focuses on data from the systematic reviews and the discussion now turns to the study findings.

## Findings

### *Features of the local research fields*

The number of publications per country shown in Table 1 is indicative of the size differential of three local research fields and partly reflects the take-up of apprenticeship programmes in the three countries and the associated policy interest. Apprenticeship as a form of initial vocational education is very marginal in Finland and marginal in both England and France. Less than 1% of 16–18-year-olds are engaged in apprenticeships in Finland, and 7–8% in England and France (Mazenod 2016). Over the last decades UK and French governments have sought to bring apprenticeships for young people into the mainstream and to expand state-funded apprenticeship programmes. In Finland, the marginality of apprenticeship is not, however, a policy concern. This is because the context is an education system where 94% of 18-year-olds participate in full-time education in contrast to 58% in England and 77% in France (Eurostats 2012). This high participation in education can help to explain the positioning of apprenticeship in Finland as the ‘last chance saloon’ for young people (Kivinen and Peltomäki 1999). There is also a strong pedagogical preference for school-based settings for young people and high societal value and esteem attached to education, linked to a strong belief in what Lindblad and Popkewitz (2004) refer to as the ‘salvation’ narrative of education. The salvation narrative of education describes the strong societal-level belief in the power of education to lead to a good life, and it helps to explain why the vast majority of young people stay engaged in full-time education in Finland.



Whilst the very low take-up of apprenticeship programmes in Finland can explain the small size of the local research field, the level of take-up doesn't explain the apparent difference in the relative sizes of the local research fields in England and France. The sheer number of publications identified in the systematic review of literature on apprenticeships in England suggested a significantly greater interest in researching apprenticeships as the sole focus of research in England in comparison to France. The specific inclusion and exclusion criteria set for the systematic reviews clearly had an impact on the publications that were reviewed in detail, but there are some indications that there is indeed a difference in the conceptualisation of the local field in France that can explain its relatively small size. In France between 1960 and 2005, there were only 9% of doctoral theses in sociology undertaken with vocational education as a subject area, compared to 27% focusing on higher education as a subject over the same time period (Moreau 2007). Furthermore, out of the 9% on vocational education, a relatively higher proportion had looked at school-based vocational education in vocational high schools rather than apprenticeships. This paucity of research on apprenticeships could be explained by researchers' ethnocentrism, with researchers being more interested in educational settings they are familiar with, for example academic school-based education, a relative decline of the French sociology of the working classes and a tendency to focus on salaried employees rather than artisans and small businesses (Moreau 2007). In the French sample, there was, however, also a distinct strand of returns to education type studies on apprenticeship. These studies traced the earning potential and employment and unemployment patterns of French apprentices in comparison to their peers in, for example, vocational high schools (see Bonnal, Favard, and Mendès-Clément 2005; Simonnet and Ulrich 2000).

The three local fields examined shared some common features, particularly the policy-driven nature of much apprenticeship research. Two broad themes of research were evident across the three local fields: content and meaning of apprenticeship and models of apprenticeships. Content and meaning attested to the different kinds of purposes and functions that were given to apprenticeships as a type of learning, and that should inform the content of learning programmes. The research theme of models of apprenticeship included benchmarking type comparisons of apprenticeships, discussion of the respective roles of stakeholders in apprenticeship systems and the development of a theory of apprenticeship as a model of learning. Differences in how these themes were articulated are illustrated through the following summary of the specific features of each of the local research fields.

Much of the discussion about apprenticeships in England revolved around the respective roles of employers and the state (e.g. Gleeson and Keep 2004). Benchmarking was another key feature of the literature (e.g. Ryan 2000), with discussion around the content and meaning of apprenticeship also taking a comparative angle (e.g. Brockmann, Clarke, and Winch 2008) in contrasting the relative lack of educational content in English apprenticeships as opposed to a number of other European apprenticeship models. The strand of transition to work literature (e.g. Vickerstaff 2003) incorporated research that uses returns to education approaches (e.g. Ryan 1998). A specific 'apprenticeship as a model of learning' research literature (e.g. Fuller and Unwin 2003; Guile and Young 1998) emerged that was unique to the English context. This research literature draws attention to the nature of learning in apprenticeship and suggests that there are a number of different situated or contextualised dimensions to a successful apprenticeship.

Content and meaning emerged as the key theme from the sample of research literature on Finnish apprenticeships. This was evident in the discussion of the respective needs and expectations of stakeholders in the apprenticeship system (e.g. Kivinen and Silvennoinen 2000) and the tendency to see apprenticeships only as a 'life belt' for disaffected young people (e.g. Kivinen and Peltomäki 1999). The sample of French research literature on apprenticeships featured discussion of the strong role of the state in legislating apprenticeships within the wider vocational educational system (e.g. Brucy and Troger, 2000; Ropé and Tanguy 2000). Content and meaning was also a key theme, with a particular focus on the inherent inequalities in the apprenticeship system (e.g. Kergoat 2007; Moreau 2008). Returns to education type, economics-based approaches featured strongly in the French sample of research literature in exploring young people's transitions to work (e.g. Sollogoub and Ulrich 1999).

The prominence of economics-based studies examining youth transitions into the labour market in France has been explained by the relatively high levels of youth unemployment and the disconnect between the worlds of education and work in the French education system (Méhaut 2008). The disciplinary approaches reflected in the publications on English apprenticeships were most varied of the three local research fields, and included economics-based, historical, philosophical and sociological approaches. Interestingly, only in the case of publications by UK-based researchers did the clear majority of publications focus exclusively on apprenticeships. Whilst also discussing apprenticeships, a significant number of the publications by French researchers and the majority of publications by Finnish researchers examined apprenticeships as part of wider phenomena, for example as a mode of vocational education in contrast with other modes of vocational education or as one possible transition route for young people into the labour market. The next section focuses on the linguistic aspects of the three local research fields.

### ***Language of publication***

In terms of language, it seems reasonable to assume that the publications on apprenticeships in Finland that were published in English were targeting a more global audience than publications in Finnish where readership would be limited to readers with proficiency in the Finnish language. The targeting of a more global audience in the publications in English was evident, for example by the inclusion of considerable foregrounding information about the Finnish vocational education and apprenticeship system (see, e.g. Kivinen and Peltomäki 1999). Publications on the Finnish apprenticeship system in Finnish included little or no foregrounding information on the system itself and thus seemed to be targeting national and regional policy-makers and other academics in the local field. Thus it is possible to divide the publications on apprenticeships in Finland by the language of publication into those seemingly targeting the global field and those targeting the local field. It should, however, be noted that within the field of education there is a history of research co-operation between the Nordic countries that has operated in Swedish (more recently also in English). This did not, however, feature in the systematic reviews in this study.

The vast majority of academic journal publications on apprenticeships in England and in Finland were published in English, with all bar one appearing in a UK-based publication (the exception being an Australasian publication). The Anglophone-centric publication pattern was not, however, evident in the publications on apprenticeships in France. The majority of

the academic journal publications on apprenticeships in France were published in French and appeared in French journals. The one academic publication on apprenticeships in France in English appeared in a Swiss academic journal, also indicating a publication pattern away from the Anglophone centre. The majority of the academic journal publications in French reflected economics-based approaches to the study of apprenticeship discussed above.

In further comparing the three local research fields, sensitivity to the local context emerged as an important criterion. The study started off with the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (2009) definition of apprenticeship as:

Systematic, long-term training alternating periods at the workplace and in an educational institution or training centre. The apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and receives remuneration (wage or allowance). The employer assumes responsibility for providing the trainee with training leading to a specific occupation. (29)

This definition could be used to describe the common ground in the technical or organisational features of the apprenticeship systems in the three study countries. As a broad generic description of European apprenticeships, it was clearly short of the key locally specific features of an apprenticeship system that would enable it to operate in practice. For example, a detailed examination of the content of the typical qualifications accessed by the apprentices and the governance of the programmes pointed to considerable differences in England, Finland and France, for example in relation to apprentices' access to and breadth of learning that can be explained by the country-specific meanings of apprenticeship (Mazenod 2016).

The significance and relevance of such country-specific meanings do not always come across well in translation. Direct translations for a specific concept may not exist and even where they do, the use of the words in the different languages may not be congruent. For example, a description of the English apprenticeship programme will typically refer to 'skills' in the sense of the competencies the apprentice is seeking to acquire. However, there is no direct equivalent of the concept of 'skills' in French. A description of the French apprenticeship programme in French will rather rely on the multi-faceted concept of '*savoir*' (knowledge). There are effectively three kinds of knowledge that can be relevant in vocational education and training: '*savoir*', '*savoir-faire*' and '*savoir-être*'. Mehaut (2011, 37) suggests that '*savoir-faire*' should be understood as being 'based on the implementation in a concrete situation of both knowledge and experience' and '*savoir-être*' as kind of knowledge and competency relating to professional conduct and behaviour. In describing the French apprenticeship system in English partly by referring to the 'skills' that a French apprentice seeks to acquire is to lose the link in the original context to the acquisition of 'knowledge' that is more theoretical in its content, rather than just 'skills.' This is a significant loss in translation, particularly as the general educational content of apprenticeship programmes in England is narrower than in many other European countries (Fuller and Unwin 2011). A straightforward translation and use of the English concept of 'skills' can conceal a fundamental difference in the conceptualisation of apprenticeships that impacts on the everyday practice of apprenticeship learning and how it is positioned within the education and training system as a whole.

Another example relates to the word 'apprenticeship' itself. 'Apprenticeship' in Finnish translates to *oppisopimuskoulutus*, a word that refers to state-funded apprenticeship programmes or historical descriptions of types of apprenticeship learning. In contrast, in French there are multiple meanings to the word 'apprenticeship' (*Fr. apprentissage*) with the most commonly understood meaning referring to the process of learning or knowledge

acquisition. Any reference to ‘apprenticeship’ in French is thus more subject to specification in order to ensure that the correct meaning is inferred. A direct translation of ‘apprenticeship’ into French does not thus automatically imply a specific approach to learning as it does in its Finnish equivalent translation where the associated conceptual framework seems much narrower. The act of translation can thus result in a type of category error where differences can be unintentionally concealed and similarities assumed through the use of language that evokes a different or broader conceptual framework than intended in the original language. Such category errors can arise, for example, in systematic reviews of translated research or in the dissemination of research in other languages and could, for example, lead to a mistaken belief in the universality of a singular concept of apprenticeship.

## Discussion

Much of education research remains linguistically inaccessible to other researchers. Research findings aimed at national education policy-makers, for example, are likely to be disseminated in the official national language and may not be translated into English or other languages. Whilst such research may primarily focus on the national education policy context, it may offer insight to policy practitioners and researchers in other countries. This is also the case for apprenticeship and skills related research that has potential for application in many different contexts worldwide. The increasing use of English as a scientific *lingua franca* can thus be seen as a positive development. In the words of Katia, a Francophone doctoral student in Gentil’s (2005) study of academic biliteracy, English ‘opens doors’. However, she also describes it as ‘taking up too much space’ (448). Where it is ‘taking up too much space’ at the expense of other languages, the hegemony of English is an unfavourable development in global scientific fields.

Bourdieu’s (2004) concept of the scientific field has been useful in this study to examine the complex relationship between local and global in the production of research on apprenticeships. In contrast to his theoretical framework with local fields constituting academic disciplines, the local fields in this comparative study refer to the three apprenticeship research fields in the case countries. The study findings suggest it can be difficult to disentangle the local from the global field in the cases of England and France. Whilst it was feasible in this study to delineate publications on apprenticeships in Finland that were targeted at the local field as those written in Finnish and those targeted at the global field as those written in English, this was not possible in the other two country cases. Given the Francophonie, it would be difficult to make any claims about the reach of publications in French beyond France itself. Furthermore, a publication on apprenticeships in England could almost simultaneously target the local and the global field with some modifications depending on the context, as knowledge generated from research in this local field would already in the ‘right’ format in terms of the language and most of the related conceptual frameworks.

The present study suggests that in the case of apprenticeship research English is far from hegemonic in the non-Anglophone local research fields. Research on apprenticeships in Finland and France continue to be largely produced in the local (national) languages, downplaying the dominance of the *lingua franca*. Research from these two local fields, however, remains virtually invisible in terms of the global education field and the global metrics of academic knowledge. Research on apprenticeships in England has the advantage of being produced in the scientific *lingua franca*, making it potentially immediately accessible by

both local and global audiences. It could thus be argued that the generation of greater scientific capital through publishing in English is of particular importance in the Finnish and French cases, both for the global exposure of apprenticeship research from those local fields, and also for the future sustainability of these local fields as areas of research. Arguably, the instrumental acquisition of greater scientific capital in these local fields through publishing in English need not, however, be tied to the development of greater linguistic capital by individual researchers as competent translation and re-contextualisation support could potentially suffice.

It was not possible to ascertain from the publications reviewed in this study the motives for publishing in English, but there is evidence elsewhere for increasing expectation that the global *lingua franca* of research is also used in local dimensions (Gentil and Séror 2014; Lahelma 2015). This expectation may arise from, for example, a university department gaining financial rewards from a publication in a prestigious journal (Ljosland 2011). In addition to the financial rewards, there is also evidence from different scientific fields of study to suggest that publications in the local/national language are perceived as having less scientific merit than publications in English (Lillis and Curry 2010; Vandenbroucke 1989).

What is clear from the study is that local fields are also still important in setting the research agenda on apprenticeships. Existing research also highlights the importance that researchers place on engaging with their local fields (Lillis and Curry 2010). The potential of research published in other local fields and in other languages can, however, be easy to forget in the global education research field dominated by English and the Anglophone centre. Due to globalisation, 'being heard internationally is [now] regarded as essential' (Shaw and Vassileva 2009, 292). 'Being heard internationally' is today almost synonymous with publishing in English. It can also lead to 'becoming trapped in the Anglo-Saxon worldview ... ideas limited by the conceptual structure of the English language' in the words of some of Bennett's (2013, 102) academic interviewees. This entrapment in the 'Anglo-Saxon worldview' is a danger for education research as a whole. The field of education research is potentially limiting itself conceptually and analytically in the long-term by allowing the field to become dominated by the *lingua franca* rather than being open to enrichment by tapping into different knowledge systems.

By effectively rewarding researchers with linguistic capital in English and privileging English over academic knowledge produced in other languages, the global field of academic knowledge production may be impoverishing the conceptual models of thinking that academics can usefully draw upon (Flowerdew 2001). This is of particular concern for comparative education research. Accounts of comparative education research activity abound with examples of conceptual non-equivalence and different contextual understandings of the research problem in different countries or linguistic communities (Dale 2015; McNess, Arthur, and Crossley 2015). The more these important nuances of difference are funnelled through the medium of English and its related conceptual frameworks, the more they become hidden and lost in translation, as illustrated through the example of the concept of 'skills'. Once the differences are lost in translation, they effectively cease to exist in the terms of the global education research field. Some concepts may even become endangered species in their own local education research fields due to competition from Anglo-Saxon concepts that may be imported from the global education fields. It is thus important to acknowledge how the use of the global *lingua franca* over other languages is in itself an increasing source of power in the education research field (Bennett 2013).



## Conclusion

This paper has explored the relational aspects of the education research field in terms of its global and local dimensions and how the language of knowledge production potentially impacts on considerations of its worth. It has drawn on existing research to outline the distinctive forms of practice in the scientific field that prioritise English-medium publications and Anglophone-centric contexts of research in the generation and legitimisation of academic knowledge. The paper has focused on the case of knowledge production about apprenticeships as a form of initial vocational education and has explored publication patterns in three local research fields over a 15-year period. It has identified differences in the contours of the local fields of research on apprenticeships. There are differences in the relative sizes of the local fields and variation both in the indicative disciplinary boundaries and how research on apprenticeships is conceptualised. The paper has raised concerns about local meanings and contexts in education being lost in translation to the scientific *lingua franca*. It has argued that this is of particular concern to cross-cultural comparative research because it devalues and masks the very diversity comparative research taps into.

Limitations to the study arise from its small scale. It has not been possible to examine text histories or career and academic writing trajectories of individual researchers and teams of researchers that would enable analysis of the patterns and the mechanisms of how linguistic capital is turned into scientific capital and potentially into economic capital through, for example, grants and academic positions. As the scope has been limited to published research, it has not been possible to examine what remains unpublished and whether language practices play a part in this. The inclusion and exclusion criteria for the systematic reviews have also impacted on the research literature that was included in the study. The use of multilingual systematic reviews has, however, provided a unique perspective to understanding knowledge produced within different local contexts. Multilingual systematic reviews can tap into the richness of the different linguistic contexts and illustrate the potential of comparative education research where researchers versed in the relevant languages can provide the linguistic bridge to access and analyse a wider range of data and to contribute to the generation of academic knowledge from a wide variety of local contexts.

As this paper has been written in English, it may be seen to be colluding with practices that are being critiqued. Dissemination of the research findings in Finnish and French to the non-Anglophone local research fields is, however, also underway. The choice of the *lingua franca* here has been a conscious one to address the global community of education researchers. There are ways in which this global community can benefit from the ability to share findings through a common language, but also to address some of the issues that have been here raised. For example, academic journals should consider embedding practices that encourage authorship from beyond the Anglophone centre, such as the initiative discussed in detail by Lillis, Magyar and Robinson-Pant (2010). Such initiatives should be embedded into the standard practices of academic journals across the board. Academic journal reviewers should be provided with some guidelines to help to enhance their sensitivity to the context(s) in which knowledge has been produced, and editors should allow more room for conceptual and linguistic expressions that may enrich our understanding even though they might not meet current benchmarks of academic writing in English. Over time this would contribute to balancing out academic knowledge production processes from an undue emphasis on interpretations based on one language and limited conceptual and contextual frameworks.



## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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## Appendix 1. Publications reviewed in-depth by academic journal title

### Publications in English

Six of the journal articles in English were published in *Journal of Education and Work*; a further six in *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*; two in *Oxford Review of Education*; and one each in *Educational Philosophy & Theory*, *Educational Research*, *Human Resource Management Journal*, *International Journal of Training and Development*, *National Institute Economic Review*, *Swiss Journal of Sociology* and *Work, Employment and Society*.

### Publications in French

Three of the journal articles in French were published in *Formation Emploi*, a French journal with a focus on education and work; a further three in *Revue Française de Pédagogie*, a French education research journal, and in *Economie et statistique*, a French economics and statistics journal; and one each in *Education Permanente*, a French journal on adult and community education, *L'Année Sociologique*, a French sociology journal, and *Education et Sociétés*, a French sociology of education journal. The three journal articles in *Revue Française de Pédagogie* related to a special issue of the journal in the year 2000.

### Publications in Finnish

The one journal article in Finnish was published in *Aikuiskasvatus*, a Finnish journal specialising in adult education.