HOW CAN TEACHING ENGLISH HELP TO PROMOTE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL HERITAGES? ON *BASIC GLOBAL ENGLISH (BGE)* AND "ADVANCED GLOBAL ENGLISH"[*]

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Abstract

Since English is the most prominent European and global lingua franca, there are reasons to respect this role of English also in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). While TEFL in Europe is oriented toward bringing learners' competences close to either standard American English or standard British English and the respective cultures, a concept of TEFL especially for compulsory stages of language learning may opt for including cultures, without focussing the American and the British ones. The contribution will illustrate the concept of Basic Global English (BGE), which was created for learners at level 0 to prepare them for communication with people of other mother tongues in general, which includes looking at communicative strategies and cultural aspects from regions and nations that the group of learners choose on their own. This way English becomes not a threat to other cultures, but a door-opener to all kinds of national and regional cultures. From these, learners may then select one or two for getting to know this culture and its language more thoroughly. The contribution presents recent developments in the project on "Basic and Advanced Global English".

Key words: English as a lingua franca – multiculturalism – teaching English as a foreign language – intercultural communication.

1. Introduction

In all walks of life we find people who fear that the increasing power of English not only as a first or second language, but also as the language that is globally most readily chosen among speakers of different mother tongues may be a threat to other national and regional languages. There are linguists who are afraid that the dominance of English in foreign language teaching may at least lead to a disinterest for other languages (cf., e.g., Phillipson 1992 and 2007, Chaudenson 2001, Skutnabb-Mangas 2003). But there are also reports that demonstrate that there is no

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such automatism (cf., e.g., van Els 2000: 26, House 2003, Grzega 2008a: 144, Schjerve-Rindler in print).

Instructors and curricula of English as a Foreign Language are still geared to a native model of English, mostly British English or American English, and the corresponding national culture behind it for their teaching, although there have been some proposals of "global textbooks" in Britain (cf., e.g, Kubanek 1999, Crawford 2001). What was missing until recently, though, were concepts of English in foreign language teaching that consciously and consistently respect the role of English as a language of intercultural communication and as a bridge language toward skills of multilingualism.

2. English as a door-opener to other languages and cultures

A few years ago, Horst Klein and others developed the idea of EuroCom. EuroCom is a method that enables learners to decode texts in a foreign language when they already command another language from the same language group (Germanic, Romanic or Slavic). The curriculum consists of seven so-called sieves, i.e. techniques to realize the similarities between the members of a language group: (1) (Neo-Latin) internationalisms, (2) language group vocabulary, (3) sound equivalences, (4) spelling and pronunciation, (5) syntactic structures, (6) morphosyntactic elements, (7) eurofixes—moreover, light is shed on so-called language-specific profile words.

What was neglected first was the potential of English for the non-Germanic languages. Due to the historically mixed Germanic-Romanic character of English, English may well be integrated into the Romanic program of EuroCom, too (cf. Grzega 2005b, Klein/Reissner 2006). Furthermore, English is not only helpful for Germanic and Romanic languages, but also, albeit to a lesser degree to the Slavic, the Celtic and the non-Indo-European languages. Many European and non-European words and a number of European affixes originate in English, although their geographical distributions are not always the same, e.g. *aerobics, dealer* (stock exchange and/or drugs)*, dinner, dress, fax, feedback, fifty-fifty, farmer, football, franchising, hi-fi, holding, jam session, jeans, joint venture, know-how, live* (adj. 'heard or seen at the time of its performance'), *lunch*, *manager*, *match, modem, non-stop, non-stop, out* 'no longer fashionable', *playback, playboy, roastbeef, shopping, team* (cf. Görlach 2001). Two widespread eurofixes from English (which are also used in pseudo-Anglicisms) are *-ing* and *-man* (e.g. *footing* 'jogging' (Fr., Sp., It., Pol., Croat.), *forcing* '1. constraining a person by force or against his or her will; 2. continual attacking (sport)' (1. Du., It., Hung.; 2. Fr., It.), *forechecking* 'the interruption of an attack from the opposing team' (G., Norw., It.). Yet not only as regards vocabulary, also as regards syntax, English can serve as a bridge language not only for Romanic languages. The patterns "subject noun phrase+ verb + bare object noun phrase" (e.g. *Anna loves life)* and "subject noun phrase + verb" (*Anna sings* or *Anna is singing*) occur in Romanic, Slavic and the Finno-Ugric languages, too.

Yet not only the acquisition of passive language competences may be facilitated, also active intercultural competence may be strengthened by making use of English's global role in an appropriate way. Taking this role into account a new model of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) has been developed since 2005: Basic Global English (BGE).

2.2. Basic Global English (BGE) and "Advanced Global English"

2.2.1. Preliminary Remarks

Already West (1935, 26) suggested that non-native speakers of English talking to other non-native speakers may use a word from their own mothertongue, explain in English what it means and go on talking with it. But for a long time, there has been no coherent and comprehensive concept of English for lingua-franca use. With the creation of Basic Global English (BGE) there is now a concept that aims at bringing learners just close to standard British or standard American English and including just aspects of the British isles and North America (and maybe a little bit of some other countries where English has an official position), and thus preparing learners for stays primarily in the UK or the US. The core idea of teaching BGE is to get students as quickly as possible to the level of global communicative competence in English (with forms of internationally successful communication). BGE is based on empirical studies on non-native/non-native communication in English (cf. Seidlhofer 2007 for a state of the art and the bibliographical hints in Grzega 2008a). It is created from successful linguistic forms among non-natives and between natives and non-natives (cf. also http://www.basicglobalenglish.com):

- In BGE only those non-standard pronunciations are penalized that have been proven to endanger communicative success between non-natives.
- BGE lists only 20 elementary grammar rules; the classification as elementary is based on personal and others' observations.
- *BGE* comprehends a basic vocabulary of 750 words, whose selection is based on both actual word frequencies and on culture-independent conceptual frequencies as accepted by many fundamental vocabularies.
- In addition, learners are requested from the very start of the learning process to create, autonomously, an individual vocabulary of at least another 250 words related to their own needs and wants (e.g. related to hobbies, profession, family members, or their culture).
- Additional word-formation patterns provide the learner with the means to coin much more than 1,000 words.
- Furthermore, BGE includes internationally functional phrases for the most basic and frequent communicative situations, including solutions for situations of communicative breakdown.

Once the level of Basic Global English is mastered, learners can fine-tune their skills toward the level they wish to. This can be a near-native level or a focus on the development of the skills for international contexts. We can therefore design

concepts of Advanced Global English, particularly the following concepts: (1) Global English for Academic Contexts (GE-A), (2) Global English for Business Contexts (GE-B), (3) Global English for Casual Contexts (GE-C). For this advanced level the same basic pronunciation and grammar requirements may be accepted as long as the focus is on spoken language; for written contexts, grammar needs to get a stronger focus since everyone knows by experience that people's aesthetic demand of native standard language is more salient then. The main focus for Advanced Global English, though, should continue to be on the elaboration of a larger general and individual vocabulary and also of communicative strategies for a larger set of situations.

As far as cultural information is concerned, there should be a lot of room for learner autonomy, again. So the learners should not only select words for a private vocabulary, but the learners or the learner group should have a say in the selection of countries to be dealt with—and these need not be countries where English has an official role.

What has already been developed is material for teaching BGE at elementary schools (Grzega 2009a), a book on "Advanced" Global English for Academic contexts (Grzega 2009b), self-teaching material (Grzega 2009c), materials for adult courses (Grzega 2009d). The creation of material for self-educated BGE is maybe the most challenging task. Since the goal is to enable all people around the world a relatively rapid acquisition of global communicative competence, the material consists of a freely accessible English book as the necessary and sufficient basis plus a book with the metalinguistic explanations of the basic book in the learner's language (currently only in German) and an audio CD as "luxury equipments".

2.2.2. Cross-Cultural Awareness of Extralinguistic Aspects

It is easy to integrate the illustration of customs in a selection of countries when there is a teacher and a learner group who select the countries and where the teacher can take care of finding suitable information. For instance: in two courses "International Business English" at a German senior high-school with participants from grades 10 to 13, i.e. they were between 15 and 19 years old, , the two groups had to decide which countries they wanted to get to know in more detail. Both groups chose the US, Canada, China and Russia; in addition one group chose Australia and Japan, the other the UK and India. After four lessons of training basic pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and politeness items, the class began to deal with business-specific issues:
• What is the elementary business vocabulary?
• How do we greet and address people?
• How do we apply for a job?
• Why do we have to know about gestures and other forms of body-language?
• How is small talk done in business situations?
• How is "big talk" done in business situations?
In each lesson the class had a look at the conversational patterns in the selected countries and tried to define conversational strategies that may work transculturally.

In these summaries, the strategy of raising people's awareness that they are in an intercultural situation and that this may cause some irritations played a salient role.

This task of country selection according to learner interests is, of course, much more difficult when you create self-teaching material. My project group has tried to combine transcultural words and knowledge with cultural examples through presenting the BGE items in an isolated manner on the one hand plus adding a few contextualized cultural examples on the other hand. The section on breakfast, for instance, is introduced by this list of words:

Fig. 1 Drink and Food

There is then a table of examples from various cultures (consciously not starting with the example from a country where English is official language):
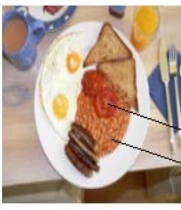
Fig. 2 Breakfast

2.2.3. Cross-Cultural Respects of Conversational Patterns

In actual communication, speakers will find out that knowing linguistic forms alone does not insure successful communication, it is also vital to know *when* to use which form, i.e. to know politeness strategies, since politeness strategies may vary tremendously from country to country. No other proposal for a simplified English has really addressed this aspect, but "over-politeness" can be as confusing for the interlocutor as "under-politeness". Therefore, BGE attempts a compromise. Based on own experiences and on other linguists' studies and views (cf. the literary references in Grzega 2008a) a series of conversational strategies were formulated for the Global English materials. Here are some examples from BGE:

*   As a "saver", a sentence like *That's how we say (in my country)* can be inserted or added. This signals the interlocutor that the speaker is just transferring his or

her own conventions into Global English. Another way is to say directly: *I think there is a misunderstanding*.

- Terms of address: In the field of personal pronouns, English (in contrast to many other languages in the world) only has *you*, both as a formal and as an informal pronoun, both for one addressee and for several addressees. Apart from this, there are a number of "neutral titles", e.g. *sir*, *Mr.* (when addressing male adults), *madam* or *mam*, *Ms.* (when addressing female adults). *Mr.* and *Ms.* can also be used in connection with the family names. Besides, there are professional titles like *President* and academic titles like *Professor*. If you introduce yourself for the first time you should say your full given and family name as well as your title and then say (indirectly or directly) if the interlocutor can or should neglect the title (e.g. "I am the president. My name is Dr. Paul Miller. You can call me Paul." in contrast to "I am President Dr. Paul Miller."; in the latter instance the interlocutor will use a very formal term of address like "President"). If you are not sure about how to address someone else you can ask this person: "So what would be the right way to call you?". A neutral greeting term is *Hello* (informally also *Hi*), a neutral leave-taking term is *Good-bye* (informally also *Bye*). After *Hello* it would be polite to ask the other person *How are you?*; but in general you just expect the answer *Fine* and not an extended "honest" account. Letters can be opened with *Dear* + name (or + *madam/sir*, if the name is not known). Informal letters can also be opened with *Hi* + name. A letter can be closed with *Best wishes* or, if the letter is formal, with *Yours truly,* + signature.
- Questions and requests should not just be formed as simple interrogative or imperative sentences. The word *please* should always be added at the end. Moreover, a request should be formulated as an interrogative, not as an imperative sentence. Example: Instead of *Open the window!* it is more polite to say <u>*Could you*</u> *open the window, please?*. If need be, you have to state explicitly that you're not uttering an order, but a request: *I wanted to say a request, not an order*. Besides, a conversation that is started in order to ask something from the other person should be started with the words *Excuse me, ...* The same holds true if you want to complain or express that you disagree. When you want to complain, you can also say: *When you do this, I feel sad, because my need for autonomy/health/beauty/leisure is not satisfied. Would you be ready to do the following?*. In the latter case, this can be done with the words *I don't think so* or *I don't agree* (instead of *don't* the form *do not* is also possible).
- Small Talk: Safe topics for international small talk are the weather, (positive) travel experiences and sports. You should avoid religion, politics, sexuality and questions that are too private (asking for the professional position is okay, though). You should also avoid jokes. Humor differs a lot between countries. If you have made a joke or a funny remark, you can add the phrase *as we say in my country* or *as we could say in my country* as a "saver". You should also watch out when paying compliments: you can compliment a gift or the meal of your host; other things should only be complimented if you know that this is

common in the host country. For international settings, you should say thank you for a compliment (and give back a similar one). (But in general, reactions to compliments vary from culture to culture.)

Speakers must also make sure that metaphorical politeness expressions such a Zambian's utterance *I see you've put on weight* for 'You're looking well' (cf. Berns 1990) are not misinterpreted. Further research in europragmatics will help to refine these "rules" and offer help for intercultural communication at a more advanced level.

Apart from these generally working strategies, country-specific pragmatic knowledge that has been gathered through cross-linguistic studies may be included. Here are some examples that may be important for adult learners (cf. also Grzega 2008b: 122f.):

• Greetings, or salutations, in telephone conversations, i.e. telephone conversation openers, differ widely from country to country (the term *Hello* or a phonetic equivalent, however, is well established or well spreading in a horizontal strip of European countries [Ireland, the UK, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Romania] and Estonia). In business telephone conversations, openers seem to differ from company to company, but it seems typically European to integrate the company's name into the opening line. Including a name in private telephone openings is rather uncommon in Europe (exceptions are the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Finland).

• Small Talk: There are no European-wide rules for when small talk is done; there are also no European-wide rules for when small talk is not done. The most typical small talk topic for Europe and probably for all other civilizations is the weather. In a central cluster (Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Italy) and in Finland, generally complaining about politics and politicians is also not atypical. In contrast, a general taboo topic for small talk is sexuality; in a horizontal line including Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Slovakia, and Hungary plus Finland (and potentially the rest of Scandinavia, where small talk is not so common either) and at least many groups of Estonia and Italy see money issues as taboo topics. In Hinduistic, Arabic, Sinic and Japanese civilization people frequently ask interlocutors about their family (in Arabic civilization, however, this excludes the wife). Due to their status-oriented nature, people from the Far East civilizations often ask for information as if they had to fill out an "official form".

• Europeans expect "thank you" in quite a number of situations, whereas Hindu people use such phrases in a very economical way and frequently contend themselves with simple looks of thanks; in contrast, other non-western civilizations have rather complex formulae of thanks.

• If you want to signal that you want to close a conversation, it may depend on the interlocutor's origin if s/he let's you go rather quickly or tries to persuade you to stay several times.

On more advanced levels, additional communicative strategies for lingua-franca situations can or should be introduced. There may even be specific rules for "Global English for Academic Contexts" (GE-A) and "Global English for Business Contexts" (GE-B). The rules for GE-A include these (cf. Grzega 2009b):

- As an instructor be as concrete as possible when referring to requirements (precise date of handing in paper etc.: the more precise your information, the more literal students will take the information). Make sure that everybody understands when assignments are due; state the specific place, day and time, e.g. *Please give this to my secretary, Maria Colo, by February 12, 11 o'clock in the morning*). Abstain from saying *by the end of the week* (students may wonder: does this mean Friday, Saturday, Sunday, or Monday, or at some time in the near future?) or saying *in five days* (does this mean calendar or business days?).
- Keep in mind that different cultures may use different conversational patterns for the same context. And keep in mind that different cultures may use the same conversational pattern for different contexts. (Example 1: In Germany and France a positive interrogative "Could you do this?" is a more polite request than a negative interrogative "Couldn't you do this?"; in Russia it's the other way around. Example 2: In Europe, an apology is an expression of regret and a sign of taking responsibility for an action; in Japan, the second function is not necessarily present).
- For technical terms, use multi-part definitions with rephrasing of the same content. Concerning definitions, we can, in principle, distinguish between the following types (cf. Grzega 2006):

(a) Aristotelian definitions	i.e. genus proximum plus differentia specifica (= generic term + differentiating specification)	e.g. "A blend is a type of word-formation that is the result of crossing two words."
(b) explicatory definition	i.e. enumeration of [stereo-]typical features	e.g. "Blends are crossings of words; they are a modern type of word-formation often used for modern phenomena."
(c) exemplary definition	i.e. enumeration of particularly typical examples	e.g. "Blends are, for example, *smog* (< *smoke* + *fog*) and *brunch* (< *breakfast* + *lunch*)."
(d) synonymic definition	i.e. giving synonyms	e.g. "Blends are also known as *word contaminations*."
(e) operational/ genetic definition	i.e. description of the process of how the definiendum can be produced or found out	e.g. "You create a blend by sticking the initial section of one word and the final section of another word together."

As for definition type (c) one may especially think of prototypical members; actually, however, there is a better understanding of a category if peripheral members are included as well (provided they are marked as such). Thus, an exemplary definition of *bird* could read: "Typical examples of birds, in North America and Europe, are the robin and the sparrow; a less typical example is the penguin." Such aspects can also be integrated in explicatory definition, e.g. "Birds lay eggs and they normally fly (although this is not a necessary feature)."

- Be aware that there might be culture-specific concepts and associations behind certain words (e.g. the word *democracy* might be differently conceived in different countries). This is particularly true of names, dates, political/historical events, and terms for political systems. But this might also be true of technical terms.
- When using examples and illustrations, don't use intracultural/local insider knowledge. At best, use cases from different cultural contexts.

The rules for GE-B include the following:
- If you are asked for your opinion on something during small talk, do not formulate any concrete opinion or an opinion that clearly deviates from your partner's.
- In group discussions where you finally have to make decisions use an integrative style, i.e. a style where group members clearly value objects higher than personal objectives, where group members eliminate personal tensions, and where all group members are allowed to have their ideas and opinions discussed and respected.
- Make everybody aware at the beginning of the meeting that this is an intercultural meeting that would require more explicit ways of communication.
- Before writing a job application make sure (a) you include the elements this commonly consists of in your target country, (b) you use a form for these elements that is common in your target country, (c) you present the elements in the correct order.

When you don't have any fixed model then, of course, a question that suggests itself is how you could test and evaluate local and global pragmatic knowledge. One possibility is a discourse completion test (DCT). Such a test was used in the "International Business English" test class. The DCT included situations that involved both cultures that were dealt with in class in order to test learners' local pragmatic skills and cultures that were not dealt with in class in order to test their global pragmatic skills. For instance, the test included a situation involving the learner and someone from the Czech Republic (a country not dealt with in class):

> You work for a German company that is specialized in language trips for teenagers and is now looking for a Czech language institute for cooperation. Your company has sent you to Prague. The flight was okay and so was the trip from the airport to the

hotel. The food in the hotel restaurant was fine and the bed in the hotel room is comfortable, but the water in the shower is only icecold and two of the three lamps don't work. You've told the hotel receptionist, but he didn't fix it neither the evening of your arrival nor during breakfast the next morning. After breakfast, you meet your business partner, Pavel Smetana, in the hotel lobby. You introduce yourselves. Pavel seems to be a very nice guy:

Pavel: *Nice to meet you. So how was your trip? Are you satisfied with the hotel?*
You: ....

The evaluation of answers was then based on the following system:

3p. = very good (VG) = (1) meta-cultural comment (2) positive sides as well as negative sides metnioned, but clearly without blaming the host, rather stating that the problems will surely be fixed or meta-cultural comment > gives the host the chance to take the next step himself and you a perspective to see the problem solved;
2p. = good (G) = no negative sides mentioned;
1p. = less good (LG) = (1) positive sides and negative sides mentioned, without blaming host explicitly, but also without seeing the problem being solved (> the blame is on the host implicitly, because he was the one who chose the hotel), (2) positive sides, but also negative sides mentioned, without stating explicitly what the problems are > unclear to host to what degree he is to blame for that, (3) positive sides and negatives sides mentioned explicitly, without taking the blame from the host at all, (4) positive sides and negative sides mentioned, without stating explicitly what the problems are, which leaves it unclear to the host to what degree he is to blame for that;
0p. = not good (G) = unintelligible utterance

Among others, the test included a scene involving the learner and someone from Russia (a country dealt with in class):

You work for a German company that is specialized in language trips for teenagers. You and a colleague, Hans, have to meet with Ivan, the representative of a Russian company working in the same business, to see how you can start a cooperation. Ivan likes your presentation and would be willing to sign a contract with you, but only a very vague one. Hans fears that the Russians will not be willing to fulfil the contract if things are not written down in detail and suggests a few more concrete elements.

Ivan: *So you think these details are necessary for our cooperation contract?*
You:
           ....

The evaluation was based on this grid:

VG = meta-level comment + putting the blame on the company/law + showing openness for suggestions;
G = putting the blame on oneself or on one's company; showing openness for suggestions; emphasizing that the contract should show the Russians' rights;
LG = it's my boss's wish/the tradition/important – period!;
NG = unintelligible utterance; to avoid problems/to avoid quarrels/past has taught us

> indicates the relationship (or a relationship with Russians) can't be trusted; this or that may be left out > face-threatening for colleague

Violations against standard grammar and standard spelling affect the number of points only when empirical studies have suggested that a specific type of mistake endangers the communicative success. It was even not marked as highly problematic when a learner used a word in German in the test as long as the German word was intelligibly explained.

2.2.4. Cross-Cultural Integration of Words and Phrases

While resorting to a word from one's native tongue if one doesn't know the English equivalent may be okay, it would be all the more advisable to know some basic formulae in a foreign language. This would be helpful for emergency cases and for gaining the listener's sympathy. Among such phrases you could count greeting formulae as well as the phrases for 'Yes', 'No', 'Please, ...', 'Thank you', 'I am sorry', 'Can you help me?', 'Where is the police/embassy/hospital/toilet?'.

Apart from this, illustrations of a country's culture may easily include the foreign words for particularities such as meals, drinks, places and holidays.

And if the teacher is well-trained a look at the phrases, words and internationalisms that do not originate in English may secondarily also include a look at the structure of the foreign language:

- If one of the cultures included is Hungary, the teacher can show with the phrase for 'Thank you', *Köszönöm*, (1) how the Hungarian diacritics work, (2) that Hungarian words are always stressed on the first syllable, (3) that grammatical meaning is put into affixes *-m* 'I', (4) that affixes are glued to the stem with the help of a link vowel depending on the vowel in the preceding syllable (a system called "vowel harmony"), (5) that the spelling *sz* is used for [s] etc.
- If one of the cultures included is Italian you may have a look at different types of coffees and pizzas and the respective names, e.g. *pizza* and *caffelatte* can illustrate that (1) double consonant letters also indicate long/double consonants in pronunciation, (2) in Italian compounds normally the second part, here *latte* 'milk', specifies the first part.
- If one of the cultures included is Romania, the word *sarmalele* may help to demonstrate that in Romanian you express definiteness by attaching a suffix to the stem (like Swedish, Danish and Norwegian) and not, as is common in the vast majority of other European languages, as separate words before a noun: *sarmale* 'stuffed cabage rolls' + *-le*.

3. Conclusion

The article has presented Basic Global English (BGE) and "Advanced Global English" as that use English to raise people's interest in other—national or regional—languages and cultures.

The idea behind Global English as presented here is not to claim that intercultural dialog becomes unproblematic, but to enable a first start of intercultural dialog and to raise the awareness for potential misunderstandings. And the concept of BGE does certainly not aim at distinguishing other languages. Rather, it is part and parcel of a model promoting global trilingualism ("global triglossia"): one's native language + Global English + a third national language of one's choice (cf. Grzega 2006: 281-283). For instance, some of the children in the BGE classes at the COMENIUS partner school in Goldkronach, Germany, tried out their BGE skills with Italian kids when they were on a school trip in Italy. Their experiences were so positive that when they came back they also wanted to participate in an Italian language course in addition to Basic Global English. This proves that English can indeed promote interest in other cultures.

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